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CHRISTIAN FUNDAMENTALS

A MODERN APOLOGY FOR THE APOSTLES' CREED

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BY

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PREFACE

AS the *Murtle Lectures on Christian Evidences*, the substance of this book was delivered to students of Aberdeen University during Session 1923–1924, but for publication in book form, the lectures have been to a considerable extent re-written. My aim in them is to present in concise form, and in simple language, an historical, exegetical, and apologetic study of each article in the Apostles' Creed. Utilising the established results of modern Biblical Criticism and historical research, I have endeavoured to give a defence of the reasonableness of belief in the fundamentals of the Christian religion as expressed in the Creed, and to show that, when properly interpreted, the doctrines therein contained are acceptable to modern thought in theology and philosophy.

As is inevitable in such a study, I am debtor to a great number of modern theological writers, and have sought to acknowledge my indebtedness by quoting freely from their writings.

There seems to be a need for a modern apology

for the Apostles' Creed, for, while books giving a defence of the general theistic position have appeared in great numbers in recent years, there has been a singular scarcity of modern treatises dealing apologetically with the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, and especially with the more difficult articles of the Creed. To help to fill up this lacuna in modern apologetics, this book has been written. I send it forth in the hope that it may help to strengthen the faith of some, and give to others a reasonable foundation for belief in "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."

ANDREW C. BAIRD.

KING'S COLLEGE, ABERDEEN,
February 1926.

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CHAPTER I

THE CREDIBILITY OF THE WITNESSES FOR THE CREED

THE Apostles' Creed has been accepted from the fourth Christian century onwards to the present day by the whole of Western Christendom as the symbol of its faith—the statement, that is to say, in the briefest possible form, of the essential facts in the history of Jesus Christ, and of the fundamental doctrines believed in by the whole Christian Church.

Far more intimately has the Creed known as the Apostles', or Roman symbol, been woven into the web of the Western Church than the other two great Creeds of Christendom, the Nicene and the Athanasian. Almost everywhere is it accepted, and in fact it might be said to be the one unifying element in all the historically diverging branches of the Christian Church. Compared with the Apostles' Creed the symbol known as the Creed

of Athanasius has always in the Western Church been regarded coldly as being alien in thought and temper to the minds of ordinary Christian people. It is too abstruse, too much a product of medieval theology, so hedged round with what seem to the average man logic-chopping distinctions, that he generally fails to understand it, and so, to all but theologians, the Creed of Athanasius is virtually unknown, and enters but little into the religious thought of the people. And the ancient Creed of Nicæa, Oriental as it is in outlook and imbued with all the mystical theology of the East, even though it is constantly used in the Communion Service of the Church of England, and occurs in the official liturgy of most of the Reformed Churches that publish an Office for Holy Communion, including the Church of Scotland—even the Nicene Creed cannot be taken as the popular expression of what Christianity stands for in the Western world. It is the Apostles' Creed that is almost universally taught in schools and Sunday schools, and taken as the requisite Confession of Faith of First Communicants in almost all Reformed Churches.

Therefore it is incumbent on every thinking Christian, to whatever branch of the Protestant Church he may belong, to make himself familiar with the history, origin, date, and authority of

the Creed of the Apostles, and also to know what Christian evidences there are to substantiate each one of its statements. But before proceeding to deal with the history of the Creed as an historical document, and to expound the meaning of each statement in the Creed *seriatim*, stating the reasons why on the evidences of Christianity each statement is entirely worthy of being believed, it is necessary as a preliminary to establish the credibility of the witnesses we shall bring forward to support the statements of doctrine the Creed contains. The question of the reliability and trustworthiness of the witnesses must naturally precede the consideration of the evidence they lead.

These witnesses, then, are primarily the New Testament writings which give us all the authoritative information we can have as to the foundations of Christianity ; and secondarily the writings of the Fathers of the Early Church, which enshrine the doctrines, traditions, and opinions as to the Christian belief held by the Church at the time when each writer lived.

And the first question is—Are these reliable witnesses to the history of Christ as given in outline in the Creed, as well as to the doctrines of the Apostolic Church ? Right at the outset, we have to investigate the statements of those who hold that there never was any historical Jesus Christ at

all, and that the history in the Gospels, as well as the history contained in the Acts of the Apostles and other books of the New Testament, is founded purely on myths, and that the Early Church practically forged the New Testament Documents to substantiate the dogmas which she taught. Therefore, say these sceptical thinkers, you cannot call any evidence in the New Testament reliable, as to the historicity of Jesus, for *a priori* they believe Jesus never lived at all. The whole evidence of the Gospels, Acts, and Epistles must be set aside, they say, as corrupted by dogmatic prejudices, and they contend that only "unbiased evidence," as they call it—that is, statements by non-Christian writers —must be used to establish whether there was an historical Jesus Christ or not. Typical of those who, in modern times, deny that there ever was any historical Jesus, and so *a fortiori* deny the credibility of the statements as to the historical Jesus Christ in the Apostles' Creed, is Mr. J. M. Robertson. In his book, *Pagan Christs*, published about a dozen years ago, he seeks to justify his denial of the real historical existence of Jesus Christ, by arguments like the following:

> The Person of Christ in the New Testament is not a person who has or had an actual existence, but the whole story of Jesus has been evolved from the Hebrew idea of Messiah-

ship, and the very name Jesus Christ = Saviour Messiah shows that Christ was a dramatic "persona" and nothing more.[1] What Robertson dares to call "the Crucifixion Myth,"[2] he presumes to show, originated in the demand in all ethnic religions for a human sacrifice; and in the institution of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper he sees only the taking over into Christianity from the pagan religion of Mithraism of the drinking by the devotees of the blood of a bull that had been slain. In the Mithra rite the blood poured through a grating from the dying animal on the heads of the blood-intoxicated Mithra-worshippers congregated below in the Mithræum, who were ready to lap it up, and bathe in it, believing that by so doing the strength of the bull would be theirs.[3]

Disagreeable though the task may be, we have got to be able to refute such impious and absurd statements as these, and to show that on unimpeachable evidence the historical career of Jesus Christ as outlined in the Apostles' Creed was as real and actual as any other well-established historical event. We must be able to prove that His historical existence is as well vouched for as that of His contemporaries Tiberius-Cæsar and

[1] *Pagan Christs*, pp. 194–203.
[2] *Op. cit.*, pp. 180–188.
[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 303.

Herod Archelaus, and that the fact of His Crucifixion can be substantiated by as great a weight of evidence as can be adduced for, say, the beheading of Charles I., King of Great Britain. Starting on the presumption that Jesus Christ was a myth—a statement which he alleges but does not prove, Mr. Robertson carefully avoids all the evidence of strict history and lets his imagination rove, and soon he is lost in clouds of myth of his own making. To him the Gospel story originated in a kind of mystery-play wherein are depicted in dramatic form the events leading up to what he maintains to be the wholly mythical Crucifixion of the Saviour —God. As an example of his statements, I quote the following extract from *Pagan Christs*, p. 196 :

> " As Christism first became popular by the development or adaptation of myths and ritual usages like those of the popular pagan systems, notably the Birth-myth, the Holy Supper, and the Resurrection, it might be expected that it should imitate paganism in the matter of dramatic mysteries. The mere Supper ritual, indeed, is itself dramatic, the celebrant personating God, as Attis was personated by the priest ; and in the remarkable expression in the Pauline Epistle to the Galatians, ch. iii. ver. 1, ' before whose eyes Christ was openly set forth crucified '—we

have probably a record of an early fashion of imaging the Crucifixion."

Having once launched his theory that Christ was a myth, Robertson, like a wet snowball set rolling from a hilltop, adds more and more to his destructive momentum, till he succeeds, in his own estimation, in destroying every vestige of credibility in any religion under the sun. He is not content with dethroning Jesus as an historical personage, but he would besmirch the Gospel record and the highest things therein, calling them survivals of degrading rites and observances of savagery. Having remarked that, among savages, the victim who is to become a human sacrifice is often permitted a measure of sexual licence and of royal state, he adduces these things to explain in blasphemous fashion the career of Jesus Christ. To quote his words:

> "In the character of the Messiah as one who associated with publicans and sinners; in his association with women and in the obstinate legend which, apart from the text, made Mary Magdalene, a visibly mythical character, figure as a former harlot, we may have another such survival."[1]

Further, he says that the story of the triumphal entry into Jersualem may preserve a tradition of

[1] *Pagan Christs*, p. 185.

a mock-royal procession for the destined victim. Even the legend of the riding on two asses, which, he avers, preserves an ancient zodiacal symbol, and at the same time a myth concerning Dionysos, " might have anciently figured in the procession of a God-victim of the Dionysiak type."[1] Now it is useless to follow J. M. Robertson through his 400 pages of diatribe against the historical Jesus, and refute it point by point. Rather let us go to the root of the whole matter. Robertson's whole argument rests on the assumption that there was no historical Jesus Christ at all. Is that assumption valid ? Consider first the evidence of non-Christian historians whose testimony would be accepted without demur even by J. M. Robertson himself, when they are not testifying to the essential historical facts about Jesus Christ.

There are at least two references[2] by almost contemporary non-Christian historians to the historical Jesus. Tacitus in his *Annals*, xv. 44, speaking of the new sect called Christians that had appeared in Rome, whom, as a pagan, he treats with contempt, says: " The originator of that name, one Chrestus, had been executed in the reign of Tiberius, by order of the administrator Pontius Pilate." Tacitus, who would have surely

[1] *Pagan Christs*, p. 185.

[2] The references by Suetonius and Pliny are omitted as being less definite.

welcomed any opportunity of accusing the Christians of following a mythical non-historical Christ if he could, here bears testimony to the historical fact embodied in one of the clauses of the Apostles' Creed that Christ—Chrestus, as Tacitus calls Him—was an historical personage, "executed by order of Pontius Pilate."

The other non-Christian historian who witnesses to the facts in the life of the historic Jesus is Josephus, the Jewish historian. In his *Antiquities of the Jews*, written about 93 A.D., *i.e.* about sixty years after the death of Christ, Josephus says (*Antiq.*, xviii. 3. 3):

> "Now, there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works—a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was the Christ, and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the Cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him, for he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him: and the tribe of Christians so named from him are not extinct at this day."

Sceptics have tried in vain to impugn the value of the evidence of this passage in Josephus on two grounds. (1) They aver that it is a later addition to Josephus' narrative—the work of some Christian transcriber and not the work of Josephus himself. (2) They say that Josephus as an historian is not accurate. As to the first objection, it may be said that if this passage is to be cut out as not being authentic, then equally the passage dealing with John the Baptist and the passage dealing with the stoning of James, the Lord's brother, in Jerusalem will have to be cut out—and the whole story of Josephus will be so reduced to shreds and tatters that it will be practically impossible to piece it together again. Furthermore, a careful examination of the language and literary style of the passage in question and of its relation to its context does not reveal any trace of its being an interpolation in the text or that it was written by any other than Josephus himself. As to the imputation against the accuracy of Josephus, let it suffice to quote the verdict of Joseph Scaliger, Italy's greatest historian and Greek scholar:

> "Josephus is the most diligent and the greatest lover of truth of all writers; nor are we afraid to affirm of him that it is more safe to believe him, not only as to the affairs of the Jews, but also as to those that are foreign

> to them, than all the Greek and Latin writers; and this because his fidelity and his compass of learning are everywhere conspicuous."[1]

In face, then, of the independent testimony of the two non-Christian historians, Tacitus and Josephus, does not J. M. Robertson's elaborately built up theory that Jesus Christ was a myth and had no historical reality, fall to the ground, like a house made of cards?

For the greater portion of the statements in the Creed, the Christian evidences on which we must rely are, of course, the New Testament writings. And the next preliminary question we must settle is, Does the New Testament give reliable testimony both to historical fact and Christian doctrine?

The statements of the Creed may be divided into two classes—(1) Statements of historical fact, (2) Statements of Christian doctrine. The second class of statements in the Apostles' Creed, the doctrines believed to be fundamental by the Christian Church, will be substantiated by an appeal to the whole New Testament, to the Epistles as well as to the Gospels; and the first class of statements, the statements of facts about the historical Jesus, must be substantiated by an appeal to the Gospels and Acts—the historical books of the New Testament.

[1] *De Emendatione Temporum*, p. 17.

Now it is, of course, impossible to discuss in this book the evidence for the reliability and trustworthiness of each book in the New Testament. That task would demand a very lengthy treatise to itself. All that can be attempted here is simply to summarise, as briefly as possible, the conclusions of modern New Testament scholarship and criticism as to the reliability of the various books. (1) It is almost unanimously agreed by New Testament critics that the whole of the New Testament writings took their rise between the years 50–140 A.D., and that they were gradually sifted into the Canon of the New Testament, because they contain the record of the facts about Christ, and of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity as believed in by the Apostolic Church. In the process of sifting many writings which were at first regarded as canonical were rejected, and the accepted books represent the considered verdict of the Church, as being the books most valuable and necessary for establishing the essential truths of the Christian faith. (2) Modern criticism has established (for all but a small minority of critics who still hold that all the New Testament books were written by the authors to whom they are traditionally attributed) that a few of the books of the New Testament are pseudepigraphical, *i.e.* they are not written by the authors whose titles they bear, but

by other early Christian writers who wish to claim Apostolic authority for their work. For example, the Epistle known as 2 Peter is almost certainly not the work of the Apostle, but a writing of the early part of the second century, a considerable time after St. Peter's death. So also it is at least possible that the Fourth Gospel and the Epistles of St. John are not from the hand of the Apostle John, but by a disciple of the Apostle, who learned much of his information at first hand from John, the son of Zebedee. So also it is thought by many scholars that the Pastoral Epistles, 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus, are not in their present form the writing of the Apostle Paul, though all admit that these Epistles contain genuine Pauline elements. But the point to be emphasised is, that though these works and some others in the New Testament may be pseudepigraphical, their trustworthiness is not thereby called in question. They relate faithfully the traditions and doctrines of the primitive Church, as taught by the Apostles; otherwise, they would not have been given the stamp of Apostolic authority, and they would not have been accorded a place in the Canon of the New Testament.

The trustworthiness of the historical books, the Gospels, and Acts of the Apostles, as records of true history has been more and more vindicated

by exact modern scholarship. When we compare the canonical Gospels and Acts with those other numerous Gospels and Acts known as the Apocrypha which the Early Church in its wisdom rejected as spurious, we are immediately aware of having passed from real historical tradition into the region of myth, fantasy, and fiction. In them we find a craving for the miraculous, a desire to support certain dogmatic positions by historical incidents that seem to be invented for the purpose, and an almost total lack of those circumstantial details, those little touches of often irrelevant matter that reveal the eye-witness, and point to the historical reality of the events narrated. The skilled historian or the judge who has been trained all his life to sift the true from the false in history would immediately sift out from the mass of other Gospels and Acts, the Gospels and Acts of our New Testament as containing the historical facts, and reject the others as not having the ring of genuineness. Of course, this is not to suppose that every detailed historical statement in any of our canonical Gospels is to be taken as a literally exact historical statement. Dr. Adam Fyfe Findlay in his recently published book, *Byways in Early Christian Literature*, sums up the evidence for the trustworthiness of the canonical Gospels in the following words :[1]

[1] Pp. 31–32.

"In the transmission of the Gospel tradition it was in the nature of things that there should be a mingling of convictions and the facts on which they were based. The meaning of a great personality like that of Jesus could not be set forth without interpretation, and that involved to some extent at least the reading into the facts of the convictions of those who had come under its spell. That is true of the Gospels we have in the New Testament. They are not mere chronicles, setting down what any one might have seen or heard in the presence of Jesus; they are narratives of His deeds and sayings written in the atmosphere of faith which He had evoked, and it was impossible to keep out of the story what men had found Him to be. That we see Jesus in the Gospels through Christian eyes is, however, no ground for scepticism as to the truth of the picture: it is rather an assurance that we are face to face with essential facts. What separates the canonical Gospels from those which the Church rejected is not the fact that they were entirely free from the influences which in the uncanonical Gospels led to the distortion or misconception of the data of history and to the invention of legend, but the fact that they were written by men who stood closer

> to the historic Jesus and were more conscious that in Him something new and wonderful had come to pass by which their lives had been transformed. Our conviction that in the Gospels we are brought close to the heart of historical reality, is confirmed not only by the character and teaching of Jesus as presented to us, which in their sublimity and inner harmony were beyond the power of any to invent, but also by the fact that in every age men, reading the Gospels, have through Jesus been brought into a new relationship with God, and have found in Him 'the Way, the Truth, and the Life.' "

It is interesting to note that two of the most exacting historical critics of modern times, Sir Wm. M. Ramsay and Professor Adolf von Harnack, have found as the results of long researches into the historical accuracy of the writings of St. Luke (Gospel and Acts of the Apostles) that, even in details of chronology and in references to secular classical history, the Evangelist shows an accuracy and trustworthiness exceeding that of any ancient historian, and both these princes of New Testament criticism have written large volumes entirely vindicating the reputation of St. Luke as a reliable and accurate historian. There are, of course, other scholars, notably Drs. Kirsopp Lake and

Foakes Jackson, who do not share this high regard for St. Luke as an historian, and in the book edited by them, *The Beginnings of Christianity*, these authors are inclined to doubt the truth of some of the statements in Acts which will be used as Christian evidences for the Apostles' Creed. But a discussion of these points had best be deferred till we come to consider the relative clauses of the Creed and the testimony for them.

The writings of the Fathers, as far as quoted in the following pages in support of the history of the Creed and of its various clauses, will be such as are generally accepted as authentic, and of known date. And care will be taken to eliminate as far as possible those writings of the Fathers considered spurious or of doubtful trustworthiness.

To sum up, it seems sufficient to establish the authority and historicity of the statements in the Apostles' Creed, if we are able to show that such statements are supported by the canonical Gospels and by the Acts of the Apostles, and if we can show that the doctrines set out in the Creed as essential to the Christian faith are found on the evidence of the New Testament writings to have been the fundamental doctrines of the Apostolic Church.

CHAPTER II

ORIGIN AND HISTORY OF THE APOSTLES' CREED AS A DOCUMENT

THE origin and early history of the Apostles' Creed as a document forms one of the most intricate and difficult problems in the sphere of Patristic literature. For, unlike the other two great Creeds of Christendom, the Nicene and the Athanasian, it never received the sanction of any of the early Ecumenical Councils of the Church, nor did it evolve out of theological debate and controversy as they did. In the early centuries the Apostles' Creed continued to exist in several forms differing from one another slightly in the rejection or insertion of certain clauses, and it was only comparatively late in the Church's history, about the middle of the eighth century, that it reached its final form as we have it to-day. Before that time the Western Fathers quote a Creed preserving essentially the same items as the Apostles' Creed, and having the clauses in most cases in the same order, but with a great variety of minor

variations. According to the polemic and apologetic needs of the time, and apparently according to the traditions of different Churches, different emphasis is laid by the Fathers, according to their period and locality, on different parts of the Creed which are amplified or abbreviated accordingly, and uniformity of usage does not seem even to have been aimed at. The clauses which are latest in being added to the Creed, according to the evidence of the Church Fathers, are those dealing with the Descent into Hell, the Communion of Saints, and the Life Everlasting.

Now this bewildering number of slight variations in the form in which the Apostles' Creed is found in the first eight centuries of the Church's history, points to the fact that the Apostles' Creed was used in a very different way, and regarded in a very different light, from the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds. If the thought and language of the two latter symbols be compared with the thought and language of the Apostles' Creed, it will at once be seen that the documents belong to two different classes, each having a different ethos from the other. The Apostles' Creed is a direct concrete statement of certain positive beliefs, non-controversial and non-philosophical in tone. It puts down in a plain, blunt way what it takes to be the fundamentals of the Christian faith, without a

single word of explanation or elucidation. It is, to all intents and purposes, a handy summary of what Christianity on its doctrinal side is. It is put forth with no authority from the Church. It relies upon no Pope nor Bishop nor Church Council to defend its statements, but gains its authority from the far weightier testimony of Christian tradition, as containing that which has been believed by the Church, "semper, ubique, et ab omnibus."

Similarly, the Apostles' Creed is defiled by no threats nor anathemas on those who do not accept it, such as disfigure the symbols both of Nicæa and of Athanasius, as, *e.g.*, this clause from the Nicene Creed:

> "But as for those who say that there was a time when He was not, and that before He was begotten He was not, and that He came into being from things that were not, or who affirm that the Son of God is of a different subsistence or essence or created, subject to change or alteration—them the Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematizes."

Or, *e.g.*, this clause from the Creed of Athanasius:

> "This is the Catholic Faith, which, except a man have faithfully and firmly believed, he shall not be able to be saved."

When we study further the language of these two latter Creeds—Nicene and Athanasian—we

find that every word in them, every expression, all the language that seems so complicated, involved, and unnecessary, is the result of long theological controversy and of the mighty conflicts waged in the Early Church against heretics of every shade of opinion. These two Creeds are, therefore, essentially theological in their outlook. Their purpose is to put into the Church's hands a weapon for offence and defence against all enemies—a standard and authoritative statement of belief that has stood the fires of criticism; and because it has been so often the battle-ground of controversy, it is to be respected as the citadel that has withstood all attacks and repelled all adversaries.

The Apostles' Creed, on the other hand, has no such polemic purpose. It is, on the whole, singularly free from reflections of theological controversy, and, to quote the words of the modern Roman Catholic Catechism, it simply states without comment or elaboration "the chief things which God has revealed."

Throughout the history of the Christian Church it has been used, not as a weapon in theological warfare, but as a test of a person's knowledge of the fundamentals, as when catechumens are under instruction with a view to their Confirmation and their partaking in the Sacrament of Holy Com-

munion. Thus the Apostles' Creed possesses a far closer kinship with the credal statements and confessions of faith found within the pages of the New Testament—*e.g.* Peter's confession, "Thou art the Christ, Son of the living God," or Paul's injunction to the Philippian jailer, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved"—than it has kinship with the great Creeds of Nicæa and Athanasius.

Coming now to consider the emergence of the Apostles' Creed in the Church and its history, the first point to be noticed is that it is essentially a document of the Western Church, whereas the other two great Creeds above mentioned are essentially Eastern in character and geographical distribution. In the first eight centuries of the Christian era, quotations of Creeds built on the pattern of the Apostles' Creed, and in most cases using its identical words and phrases, are found in the works of Church Fathers writing from Rome, North Italy, North Africa, Gaul, and Germany; whereas in the same period, the Nicene or Athanasian symbols are the patterns for Creeds emanating from Chalcedon, Constantinople, Jerusalem, Alexandria, Cæsarea, and Antioch. Thus the difference in credal statement corresponds exactly to the geographical division of the Eastern and Western Churches.

Attempts have been made, especially by Roman Catholic theologians, to show that the supremacy of the Apostles' Creed in Western Christendom was due to the influence and Apostolic authority of Rome, and to edicts that issued from the throne of St. Peter, but the evidence is all against any such theory of Roman supremacy, even though such a great authority as Professor Kattenbusch claims Rome as the place of origin, and the authority of the Roman Pontiff as being behind the Creed of the Apostles. The Roman Church does not permit the slightest modification or alteration of any decree promulgated by the Pope or by his authority. Is it likely then that the early Roman Church, if it had possessed similar powers, would have permitted the continued existence through centuries of all the bewildering variations that we have seen to be characteristic of the history of the Apostles' Creed as an historical document? In fact, we may be certain, on the other hand, that this lack of uniformity in the Apostles' Creed is a sure indication that Rome possessed no absolute Apostolic authority as the promulgator of doctrine in the early centuries. It was rather the genius of the Western Church, the demand for clear and unambiguous explicit statement, that made the Apostles' Creed the symbol of Western Christendom, rather than any Papal authority. There

was far more ecclesiastical authority behind the Creeds of the Eastern Church, each one of which bore the "imprimatur of some Church Council," than behind the great Creed of the West.

In precisely its present form the Apostles' Creed makes its earliest appearance in the writings of Pirminius, who was a Bishop of South Germany and a Benedictine monk, being also the founder of the Abbey of Reichenau. Pirminius wrote his treatise *circa* 730–750 A.D., and the desire of the Pope of that day to promote uniformity of usage throughout the Church, as well as the zeal of the Benedictine Order, soon made the form of the Creed quoted by Pirminius universally used and recognised by the whole Western Church. The Church at Rome had possessed a shortened form of the Creed going back as early as the second century, and possibly even earlier, but the symbol in the form given by Pirminius was immediately accepted by Rome as being more akin to the forms current in the Western portion of the Church, in Gaul and Germany.

Passing in review the principal forms of the Creed that emerged between the second century and the eighth, we find that the chief writers who give us knowledge of the Creed at different dates are the following:

About the year 400 A.D., Rufinus, who was Presbyter of Aquileia, that ancient city at the head of the Adriatic Sea in Italy, wrote an exposition and commentary on the Apostles' Creed called *Expositio Symb. Apost.*, and quotes the Creed both in Greek and Latin, for, as late as 400 A.D., the Church of Aquileia still retained Greek as well as Latin in common use—the Greek influence surviving in Venetia long after it had disappeared in Rome itself. The chief differences in the Creed of Rufinus from the later version are (1) omissions—"Maker of heaven and earth," "the communion of saints," and "the life everlasting"; (2) Alterations in wording—"Who was born from (*de*) the Holy Spirit of Mary, the Virgin," "crucified under Pontius Pilate, and buried." In the course of his commentary Rufinus states that the Creed of Aquileia had after the words "the Father Almighty," the words "invisible and impassible," which he eliminates, because they were introduced through the influence of the Eastern Church and the Patripassian controversy.

The words "He descended into Hell" were also found by Rufinus in the Creed of Aquileia, adopted from the Creeds of Syria, and finally incorporated by Rome into the Apostles' Creed, though rejected by Rufinus. The other variations in Rufinus's Creed from the later forms of the Apostles' Creed

may also be explained historically. The phrase, "Maker of heaven and earth," which he omits, is found in the earlier Creeds of Gaul and North Africa (Tertullian) whence it was incorporated into the Roman symbol. The form of words, "suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried," which is altered by Rufinus, is also found in early Creeds of the Gallican Church and in the Church of Milan. The usage of Gaul is also responsible for introducing the word "catholic" before "Church," and for the clause "the communion of saints." The insertion of the belief in "the life everlasting" was a reversion to the form of the Creed in the earlier Fathers, this clause being found in the Creeds of Marcellus (Rome, 341 A.D.), Irenæus (Gaul, 180 A.D.), Augustine of Hippo (North Africa, 400 A.D.), and Cyprian (Carthage, 250 A.D.).

Looking now to the early history of the Creed, we turn first to North Africa in the time of Tertullian, *circa* 200 A.D. In the treatises of this remarkable writer there is frequent reference to the "Rule of Faith," and, though he does not quote the words as a Creed, the "Rule of Faith" of Tertullian is simply a paraphrase of the Apostles' Creed, and almost the whole of that symbol can be reconstructed from the statements of Tertullian about the "Rule of Faith." As

Professor Curtis says (*History of Creeds and Confessions of Faith*[1]):

> "For Tertullian, the 'Rule of Faith' no longer denotes Holy Scripture: it always means the Creed which is above question, and by which conflicting interpretations or summaries of Scriptures are to be tested. He says it was probably instituted by Christ. The 'Rule of Faith' which he knows in Carthage is described as a 'token' as 'a symbol' as 'a passport to Communion,' shared, he tells us, by the African Churches with the Church of Rome."

It is therefore a summary for teaching purposes, designed for instruction rather than as an instrument in controversy. Cyprian, the pupil of Tertullian, shows that such was clearly the purpose, for he puts in simplest form the questions asked of catechumens. "Dost thou believe in God the Father, in Christ the Son, in the Holy Spirit? Dost thou believe in the forgiveness of sins, and the life everlasting, through the Holy Church?"

The evidence of St. Augustine of Hippo, *circa* 400 A.D., as to the Creed is more difficult to evaluate, because certain sermons supposed to have been written by him which quote the Creed in its modern form have now been established to be forgeries of the

[1] Pp. 52–53.

eighth century, a fact which is admitted even by writers on the Creed who belong to the Benedictine Order. In his genuine works St. Augustine uses a form of the Creed practically identical with that of Rufinus of Aquileia which we have already noticed.

Turning now to the evidence of the Church of Gaul represented by Irenæus, *circa* 180 A.D., we find in his work *Contra Hæreses* that he regards the Creed as an instrument for teaching, and he prefaces his quoting of the Creed with the statement: "The Church, though scattered abroad through all the world to the ends of the earth, has received from the Apostles and their disciples the faith." Then follow the clauses as in the Apostles' Creed, not verbally exact, but in the same order except that "the Holy Catholic Church," "the communion of saints," and "the forgiveness of sins" are omitted, as, of course, also "the Descent into Hell." A notable feature of the Creed of Irenæus is that all specific mention of the Virgin Birth is omitted. All that Irenæus says of the Birth of Christ is "who was made flesh for our salvation," though he mentions elsewhere Christ's Birth from the Virgin.

Summarising the evidence in the above brief review, we seem bound to conclude with Professor Harnack that the Apostles' Creed in its essential

features was in common use in the Western Church as a means of instruction before the end of the second century, though it was not regarded as a definite statement, but rather as a summing up of definite traditions going back to Apostolic times. In the two centuries 250–450 A.D. the statement of fundamentals was finally crystallised out as a "Rule of Faith," though it was not till three hundred years later that the Creed assumed its present form by the insertion of such articles as "the Descent into Hell" and "the communion of saints."

Turning now to the question of the origin of the Creed, we ask, "How did it arise? Was it extracted from the Scriptures, as containing the essence of the New Testament Scriptures, or was it prior in date to the writing of the New Testament?" Here we must notice first the tradition that the Creed was drawn up by the Twelve Apostles in Jerusalem under the inspiration of the Day of Pentecost, and before their dispersion on their missionary journeys, and that each one of the Twelve is responsible for one article of the Creed. This tradition is still taught in the Roman Catholic Catechism, though it appears very late in the Church's history. Only when the Creed was stabilised in its present form in the time of Pirminius, could the legend attain to its present

dimensions. And so we find it in two sermons formerly attributed to St. Augustine which are now proved to be forgeries not earlier than the eighth century, probably written to give the authority of that great theologian to the division of the articles of the Creed among the Twelve Apostles. Pirminius himself makes a similar allocation of the articles, namely :

PETER—1. I believe in God, the Father Almighty,

JOHN—2. Maker of heaven and earth ;

JAMES—3. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,

ANDREW—4. Who was conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary,

PHILIP—5. Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried ;

THOMAS—6. He descended into Hell ; on the third day He rose again from the dead,

BARTHOLOMEW—7. He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty ;

MATTHEW—8. From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

JAMES, the son of Alphæus—9. I believe in the Holy Ghost ; the Holy Catholic Church ;

SIMON ZELOTES—10. The communion of saints;
the forgiveness of sins;
JUDE, the brother of James—11. The resurrection of the body;
MATTHIAS—12. And the life everlasting.
Amen.

But in the writings of Ambrose of Milan, 400 A.D., and of Rufinus of the same date, we find that these two writers claim that the Creed has Apostolic authority and is in the very words of the Apostles, though they do not say that each Apostle composed one of its articles. It seems perfectly obvious that the legend of twelve contributions, one by each of the Apostles, must be false, just because, as we have seen, there were so many variations in the Creed extant, and it is inconceivable, if it was an actual document framed by the Apostles, the Church would have been so careless of it as to allow some of the clauses to disappear entirely.

A much more trustworthy indication as to the origin of the Creed is given by Irenæus in another passage of his treatise *Contra Hæreses*:

> "If the Apostles had not left us the Scriptures, would it not be necessary to follow the order of tradition, which those to whom they committed the Churches handed down? To

> this order many nations of barbarians give assent, those who believe in Christ having salvation written in their hearts by the Spirit without paper and ink, and guarding diligently the ancient tradition, believing . . ."

Then follows a shortened paraphrase of the Apostles' Creed. Irenæus thus indicates that the Apostles' Creed was *not* framed from the New Testament, after the New Testament Canon had been completed, but rested on oral tradition going right back to the Apostles themselves. Now it seems to me that the testimony of Irenæus is entirely worthy of credence, though most modern commentators on the Creed seem to take it for granted that the Creed grew out of the Scriptures. If we think of the circumstances and conditions of the primitive Church, we shall see that the teachers and evangelists would require some instrument of teaching to give to converts some summary of the essentials of the Christian faith. For in the Apostolic Church the Apostles had no written New Testament Scriptures, and there was no definite Canon Law, and no definite sphere of ecclesiastical authority. But that the Church possessed some kind of summary of the faith seems evident from the unanimity of the testimony to the faith by the earliest preachers, Peter, Philip, James, Stephen, and Paul, as recorded in the Acts

of the Apostles. Very quickly would this summary of the faith become stereotyped in its essentials, though wide latitudes would be allowed in the verbal forms used, provided the sum and substance of the Creed was preserved. And with that suspicion of the *written* word which Irenæus refers to as characteristic of the Christian Church in its earliest days, it is highly probable that this summary of the faith, this tradition of sound doctrine, would be handed down orally, by faithful men.

The researches of the late Dr. Bruce M'Ewen into the origin of the Creed, which unfortunately were never published, have proved that the essentials of the Apostles' Creed, used in this way, had been stereotyped as early as the time of writing of the Acts of the Apostles, *circa* 63 A.D., and the sermons quoted in Acts as preached by the Apostles and deacons of the Apostolic Church contain the identical words and phrases and in the identical order of the Apostles' Creed, as an examination of the analysis given overleaf shows.

It would appear from an examination of the credal statements in Acts (1) that the Creed of the Apostolic Church was entirely Western in character, approximating in language, in the order of its sections, and in its theological ideas to the Apostles' Creed. (2) This Creed is traceable all through Acts and is everywhere identical. (3)

TABLE SHOWING PARALLELISM IN CHIEF CREDAL PASSAGES OF ACTS.

SPEECH OF PETER.	PRAYER OF THE CHURCH AT JERUSALEM.	SPEECH OF PETER.	SPEECH OF PETER.	SPEECH OF PAUL.
Acts iii. 12-26.	Acts iv. 24-30.	Acts v. 29-32.	Acts x. 35-44.	Acts xiii. 23-38.
God.	God.	God.	God.	God.
...	Maker of heaven and earth.	...	...	...
Jesus. 13, (20).	Jesus.	Jesus.	Jesus.	Jesus.
Sonship.	Sonship. 26, 27, 30.	...	...	(Sonship). 33.
Suffered. 13, (18).	Suffered.	...	...	Suffered.
Pilate.	Pontius Pilate.	...	...	Pilate.
Crucified.	...	Crucified.	Crucified.	Crucified and buried.
Raised.	...	Raised.	Raised. The third day. Rose again. From the dead.	Raised.
Received into heaven.	...	Exalted to the right hand of God.	Judge of the quick and the dead.	...
...	...	Holy Ghost.	(Holy Ghost?)	...
Forgiveness of sins. (19), 26.	...	Forgiveness of sins.	Forgiveness of sins.	Forgiveness o sins.

From the early speeches of Acts, this Creed would seem to have been originally the pronouncement of St. Peter. (4) As early as 63 A.D., the time of writing of the Book of Acts, this Creed was universal in the Church as a general statement of the Christian faith, being used by the preachers to Jew and Gentile alike.

Now, of course, these conclusions make the Apostles' Creed much more ancient than has generally been supposed, as it is usual to say that the Apostles' Creed is entirely unknown to Church history earlier than 150 A.D. But it should be noted that the Creed as restored from the Book of Acts is very much shorter in form than the later versions of the Apostles' Creed. It omits all mention of (1) the Virgin Birth of Christ, (2) the Descent into Hell, (3) the Holy Catholic Church, (4) the communion of saints, (5) the resurrection of the body, and (6) the life everlasting. In fact, it is a statement of the Christian faith very closely resembling the credal statements of Irenæus and the "Rule of Faith" of Tertullian. We may, therefore, be justified in concluding that the tradition in the Church from Irenæus to Ambrose that the Apostles' Creed in its essence goes back to the Apostles themselves is a true one, amply confirmed by an analysis of the phraseology of the credal passages in the Book of Acts.

CHAPTER III

THE BELIEF IN GOD, THE FATHER

"I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth."

IN its earlier forms the Apostles' Creed expressed far more clearly belief in the Trinity as the fundamental doctrine of the Christian religion than in the later standardised form in which the Trinitarianism of the Creed is not so strongly stressed. In the earlier form the belief in the Three Persons in the Trinity is emphasised by the use of "*et* . . . *et*"—*e.g.* Rufinus's Creed has "Credo in Deum Patrem omnipotentem . . . *et* in Christum Jesum . . . *et* in Spiritum Sanctum." The insertion of "Credo" before "in Spiritum Sanctum" in the later form of the Creed obscures its testimony to a true Trinity.

Considering the first article of the Creed in detail, we have to notice the following variations in early forms:

1. Irenæus, in one of his credal passages, has all the details of the first article in expanded form. His statement expresses belief "in one God, the

Father Almighty, who hath made the heaven and the earth and the seas, and all that in them is "—language practically identical with the credal passage of Acts iv. 24, except that Acts omits the words, "the Father Almighty."

2. Tertullian's "Rule of Faith" is similar in statement to Irenæus, but omits mention of the Fatherhood of God.

3. Marcellus omits the words, "the Father," and "Maker of heaven and earth."

4. Rufinus omits the words, "Maker of heaven and earth."

It would appear, therefore, that in the first article, the two statements late in being universally accepted in the Creed were (1) the belief in God as "the Father," (2) belief in God as "Maker of heaven and earth." Professor Harnack concludes somewhat rashly that the omission of the words "the Father" from the second to fourth century versions of the Creed means that the Early Church was unwilling to attribute the name "Father" and the attributes of Fatherhood to the Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth—in spite of the fact that such a doctrine is explicit and implicit throughout the New Testament. Jesus says in St. John's Gospel (xiv. 9): "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." In James i. 17, God is described: "the Father of the spirits of men." So also in

St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians iii. 14, 15, God is referred to as "the Father, of whom the whole family in heaven and on earth is named." The testimony of the early Christian Fathers shows that they habitually described God as "the Father" while thinking of Him as the Creator. More than once in his First Apology, Justin Martyr uses the phrase, "God, the Father and Lord of the Universe." I can find no evidence that the Apostolic Church or the Church of the second century found any difficulty in the phrase *Πατήρ παντοκράτωρ*, or found any philosophical difficulty in attributing Fatherhood to "the Maker of heaven and earth." The absence of explicit reference to the Fatherhood of God in some of the early forms of the Creed seems to be due rather to its being considered redundant, as the very next clause, even in the early forms, goes on to speak of "Jesus Christ, His only-begotten Son," and that surely implies the Fatherhood of the First Person in the Trinity. This explanation of the omission of the word "Father" is found as far back as Rufinus and Cyril. The omission of the word is certainly not due to any unbelief in the Fatherhood of God, or to any lack of emphasis on the paternal relationship of the Creator of all things.

But unfortunately the neglect of mention of

the Fatherhood of God in later theology is not to be so explained. It is most astonishing to find that the Fatherhood of God, which is the constant theme of Christ's teaching, is not even mentioned in the Shorter Catechism, except when quoting the Lord's Prayer, nor does it enter into the Confession of Faith of the Westminster Divines, except once when the Trinitarian formula is quoted. In the system of doctrine of John Calvin there is never a thought of the Fatherhood of God, and the reason is not far to seek. Calvin and the Westminster Divines thought of God as the Supreme Lord—δεσπότης—rather than as a Father. They derived their fundamental ideas of God's sovereignty from the Old Testament rather than from the New, and they preferred to think of the rights of God to deal arbitrarily with man and impose His decrees, " according to His mere good pleasure," rather than of the Divine Father whose every act is love. How different is this harsh doctrine from the teaching of One who taught us to say " Our Father," and to believe that " it is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of His children should perish " ! How much better did the Apostolic Church understand the mind of the Master, as when Clement of Rome wrote in his Epistle to the Corinthians, " Let us approach Him in holiness of soul, lifting up to Him pure hands

and undefiled, loving our gentle and compassionate Father, who made us an elect portion for Himself."

In modern times there has been a much-needed reaction against the harshness of the Calvinistic doctrine of God, and no doctrine has been more emphasised in recent years than that of the Fatherhood of God. And yet there are many minds that seem to feel a difficulty in attributing to the Almighty God, Maker of heaven and earth, the function of Fatherhood. Rev. Andrew Boyd Scott, in his recently published book, *Nevertheless We Believe*, has expressed most clearly the difficulty of the modern mind in correlating the ideas of the Almighty and Infinite God—and the Father of all mankind. He says (p. 10) :

> " Beyond that little width in which he sees God as light and love, there stretches immeasurably a fearful, divine Majesty of which he cries, ' We know nothing of it, and can detect nothing.' So dismayed is he at the unknown depths of God that he simply gives up the attempt to know the inner, the ultimate Deity. He settles down, as one shaken in soul, but not in despair, with a doctrine of two Gods ! There is in and behind this Universe, he declares, a Veiled Being, the maker of all things in heaven and earth. Of Him we know nothing and can know nothing.

> But there is in this planetary Universe which alone we can see and investigate, a God, who comes forth somehow from the Veiled Being, and who labours and grows within this labouring and growing world and its personification in Man. He is a God of Love, of communion with man, of heroic comradeship, who sacrifices Himself daily that we and flowers and birds may grow into fuller and richer life."

The reason why so many like the writer just quoted are obsessed by this apparently irreconcilable dualism in their thought of God, is that their conception of Deity has been corrupted by altogether false ideas from a dominant school of modern philosophers, and when they think of God they try to think of Him in terms of that vain abstraction—the philosophical Absolute, till their religious nature rebels, and a dualistic conception of God's nature results, the heart demanding one conception of the Divine nature, the head another. The Absolute to Bernard Bosanquet and A. C. Bradley is a Divine Being, unrelated and undefined, a congeries of negative attributes, corresponding to nothing in heaven and earth. Mr. A. C. Bradley in his book, *Appearance and Reality*, which appeared about twenty years ago, has invented as his conception of Deity an Absolute that is almost entirely devoid of content, and certainly possesses no reality

whatever from the religious man's point of view. To me a mathematical equation possesses more reality, and is less of an abstraction than the Absolute of Bosanquet and Bradley. At least the mathematical equation is true over a certain field of investigations, the philosophical Absolute is true to reality nowhere at all. Under the influence of such erroneous philosophy some modern theologians have become very chary of attributing any positive qualities to God at all, and still more chary of attributing to Him personality, such as is implied in the phrase, "God, the Father of us all." And so Mr. Boyd Scott in his book on the creed of the modern man makes much of our necessary ignorance of God. He speaks much of "the little we know about God."

Now all this seems to be not only a denial of the Christian revelation that God is the Father, but a denial also of our own right and power to acquire any true knowledge of God at all. For while, of course, there must be depths in the nature of God that man with his limited and finite nature must fail to plumb, yet there are certain elements in the nature of God of which we can have clear and perfect knowledge. To put the theistic apologetic in the briefest possible form, we may say, that God must be at least as great as the most wonderful, complex, and highly-developed thing

we know. Therefore God must be at least a personal God with all the attributes of personality perfected—or else we poor human beings would be greater than God is, just as we are far greater, more complex, and more wonderful than the Absolute of Bosanquet. And since the highest attribute of human personality is love, God must be a personality exhibiting perfect love. In other words, " the Maker of heaven and earth " must also be " the Father of all," who loves the creatures He has created. Precisely *how* God created the world and man must for ever remain a mystery to us, but that the Father-God, who created us, loves us with a Father's love, is no dogma impossible to believe. Our ignorance of the exact manner of God's creating work does not imply ignorance of God's love to His created beings. As well argue that a human father's love for his son must be something vague, indefinite, and unintelligible, because the exact manner in which his characteristics of feature and of temperament were passed on to his offspring, before the birth of that offspring, is still a mystery little understood by physiologists. Or, to take another analogy, we do not know what electricity is. No man has been able to demonstrate that the electric " current " is a real flow or current at all. No one has been able even to prove the existence of the ether

through which the waves of electricity are supposed to travel. But our ignorance of the exact nature of electricity and the ether does not prevent us using electricity for driving a tram-car with perfect knowledge of how it will respond to the actions of the motorman, nor does it prevent us setting up a wireless receiving instrument to catch up waves of electricity of the very nature of which we are ignorant, and which have come through the ether, the existence of which is a gratuitous assumption, for the ether may not be there at all. And yet we know that if our receiving set be rightly tuned, we shall infallibly catch the message of music and of speech as clearly as if we heard the music and the speech directly by the ear. So also with the nature of God. We do not know *all* about God. The question of how He made heaven and earth we cannot solve. We may have different hypotheses—but, like the ether of the scientists, they can be no more than hypotheses; but when we come to God's relations with man, we are in the region of hypothesis no longer; we know *for certain* how God acts. His relation to us is ever that of perfect love. He is the Father of us all, and there is nothing vague nor indefinite in His relation to man in that capacity.

But as soon as we begin to speak of God as Father, there is immediately a cry raised by the

philosophers, "Are you not simply making God in man's image? Are you not merely setting up an anthropomorphic image of Deity to flatter your own vanity?" Carlyle, in *Sartor Resartus*, gives a caricature of the philosophers' objection in his comparison between Man and Minnow.

> "To the Minnow every cranny and pebble and quality and accident of its little native creek may have become familiar: but does the Minnow understand the Ocean Tides and Periodic Currents, the Trade Winds and Monsoons and Moon's Eclipses; by all which the condition of its little creek is regulated, and may from time to time (unmiraculously enough) be quite overset and reversed? Such a Minnow is Man: his Creek, this planet Earth; his Ocean, the unmeasurable All; his Monsoons and Periodic Currents, the mysterious course of Providence through Æons of Æons."

Rupert Brooke carries the thought of Carlyle one step further in his poem on the fish's idea of Heaven:

> "But somewhere, beyond Space and Time
> Is wetter water, slimier slime!
> And there (they trust) there swimmeth One
> Who swam ere rivers were begun—
> Immense, of fishy form and mind,
> Squamous, omnipotent, and kind;
> And under that Almighty Fin
> The littlest fish may enter in.

Oh! never fly conceals a hook,
Fish say, in the Eternal Brook,
And more than mundane weeds are there,
And mud, celestially fair;
Fat caterpillars drift around
And Paradisal grubs are found;
Unfading moths, immortal flies,
And the worm that never dies.
And in that Heaven of all they wish
There shall be no more land, say fish."

But though it is easy in this way to parody the idea of Personality and Fatherhood in God, yet the greatest scientists are far more ready to believe in "God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth," than they are to put trust in the nebulous amorphous Absolute of the philosophers of the school of Bosanquet and Bradley. William Temple, the Bishop of Manchester, has well said in this connection:

> "If the Infinite Being is a mere undifferentiated substance, then I suggest, and even insist, that He fails to meet the demand for a self-explanatory principle. He is Himself a mere brute fact. He is a block of being. If the ultimate reality is just substance without any quality or character—a mere stuff, as it were, which flowing into different moulds assumes different forms and characters, under the conditions of finite existence—it explains nothing whatever." [1]

[1] *The Universality of Christ*, p. 51.

And similar conclusions are come to from the scientific side, as to the ultimate reality, by Professor Hobson, the mathematician of Cambridge. In his Gifford Lectures, Dr. Hobson shows the impotence of all the sciences to explain themselves, and lays stress on the refusal of scientists to adopt the philosophical Absolute as their explanation. He further shows that every advance in knowledge is achieved through human personality, and therefore, he argues, the Deity behind the created Universe must have in His nature something akin to personality. And so Dr. Hobson comes within measurable distance of believing in the first statement of the Apostles' Creed that the Almighty God is at once the Father of all, and the Maker of heaven and earth. In other words, the scientific thought of our day is demanding that the Infinite Being behind the Universe should have a moral and personal character—and seeing clearly that this does not involve any contradiction in the limitless nature of God when properly understood.

The acute mind of the Bishop of Manchester has seen clearly, however, that the conception of God as Heavenly Father involves certain restrictions on the limitlessness and almightiness of God. He says :

> " It is true that a Being who has character is not logically infinite. If He is love, He is

> not hate: if He is righteous, He is not capricious, and so forth. But there is no logical ground for demanding as the explanation of the Universe a Being who is logically infinite. Being in general is a possible object of contemplation, but it is the thinnest and emptiest of all concepts. What philosophy requires is a Being who is infinite in the sense that He depends on nothing other than Himself, while all else depends on Him. Such a Being must be conceived in terms of Will. And Will is only real in the degree in which it is definite."[1]

Hence, from the philosophical point of view, Temple comes to the necessity of thinking of God, as in the phraseology of the Creed, as "the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth."

The fundamental error of John Calvin and of Calvinistic theologians, that has caused them to abjure all thought of the Fatherhood of God, was their misunderstanding of the meaning of the Almightiness of God. "Deus omnipotens" meant to them that God had both the right and the power to do as He pleased—to act morally or immorally—"for His mere good pleasure" to condemn some to everlasting death—even to deny His own nature as perfect love. But the true

[1] *The Universality of Christ*, pp. 52–53.

meaning of *Θέος παντοκράτωρ* in the New Testament, as in the Apostles' Creed, is far different from this. The phrase means that God is the author of all things, that He depends on nothing other than Himself, while all else depends on Him. In this way there is no cleavage between the idea of God Almighty as properly understood, and God limited by His own nature as Father of all, and as perfect love.

Thus it would appear that the first article in the Apostles' Creed is not only proved to be true by the unanimous testimony of Christian revelation, but more and more the scientists and philosophers are being driven by their own thought to confess their belief in the Ultimate Reality as belief in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

CHAPTER IV

THE BELIEF IN CHRIST, THE SON

"And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into Hell; the third day He rose from the dead, He ascended into Heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty: from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead."

LET us first briefly survey the principal variants in this section in some of the earlier forms of the Creed. As we have already noticed, the words "He descended into Hell" are a later addition to the Belief, and occur first in the Creed mentioned by Rufinus as being the Creed of his native Aquileia. The history of the insertion of these words will be given in a later chapter.

In the credal statements in the writings of Irenæus, *circa* 180 A.D., we do not find the words "conceived by the Holy Ghost," but only that Jesus Christ was "born of the Virgin." So also in the various statements of the "Rule of Faith" in the writings of Tertullian we find practically all the statements of the Apostles' Creed in this

section dealing with Christ, except the above-mentioned "descent into Hell" and the words "conceived by the Holy Ghost." Instead of the latter, Tertullian has the beautiful statement of the pre-existence of Christ and His human birth—

> "that this Word, called His Son, was seen in the name of God in various ways by the patriarchs, was always heard in the prophets, at last was sent down from the Spirit and power of God the Father into the Virgin Mary, was made flesh in her womb, and born of her, appeared as Jesus Christ."

The only other late addition to the Belief in Christ in this section of the Creed is the insertion of the word "dead" between "crucified" and "buried," probably due, as we shall see, to the springing up of the Docetic heresy that Christ did not really die. Now it is precisely those items in the Creed concerning the Belief in Christ that were not finally inserted till late that have excited most controversy in modern times.

Before examining in detail each of the statements of the Belief about Christ, let us first take a broad general survey of the fundamental differences in this section between the statements of the Creed of the Western Church and the statements of the Creeds of the East, which were all founded on the great Creed of Nicæa—Creeds like those of

Jerusalem, Constantinople, Alexandria (the Creed of Origen), and in later times the Creed of Chalcedon, 481 A.D.

The great distinguishing characteristic of these Eastern Creeds is their strongly theological outlook, their emphatic assertion of the eternal existence of the Son, and that the Son was not created by the Father, but is of one substance with the Father. The statement of the Nicene Creed in this section is in the following words:

> "And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, only-begotten, that is, of the substance of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, through whom all things were made, both those in heaven and those on earth; Who for us men and for our salvation came down and was made flesh, entered humanity and suffered, and rose the third day, ascended into heaven, is coming to judge the living and the dead. But as for those who say that there was a time when He was not, and that before He was begotten He was not, and that He came into being from things that were not, or who affirm that the Son of God is of a different subsistence, or essence, or created, subject to change or alteration,

them the Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematizes."

Here we have the language not of religion but of theological controversy, and a definition of terms produced by the great Arian controversy, which has left its mark on the Creed of Nicæa in its almost exaggerated emphasis on the pre-existence of the Son and His consubstantiality with the Father. And this exaggerated precision in defining the relationships of the Persons in the Trinity we find to its fullest extent in the Athanasian Creed, the " Quicunque vult," with all its meticulous exactitude and logic-chopping differentiations.

For the remainder of this chapter, let us concentrate our attention on the Christian evidences for the words, " And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord." What do these words imply ? Is it right to say that the Apostles' Creed has no knowledge of, or takes no cognizance of, the pre-existent eternal Christ, and fixes its attention solely on Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, born of Mary, as some aver ?

We certainly find in the Apostles' Creed no explicit statement of the pre-existence of Christ, none of the elaborations of definition as to His nature that are so characteristic of the Creeds of the Eastern Church—but that does not mean that the idea of the pre-existent eternal Christ is not

there. It is implicit throughout the Creed that Christ is co-equal with God, existent from all eternity. As attested both by Marcellus and Rufinus, the Creed in the fourth century expressed belief "in Christ Jesus, His only Son," which certainly seems to imply that Christ is co-equal and co-eternal with the Father. It is surprising that all the controversies on Christology that raged throughout the Church in the first four centuries should have left so little mark on the Apostles' Creed, and that fact is at once a sign of the great authority that the Creed in its simple form possessed, and a sign of its great antiquity. It had already established itself in definite form so that all the controversies of later date could not change its primitive simplicity. Moreover, it is a fact of history that Western Christendom was far less interested in controversies about the pre-existence of Christ than was the East; and the Church of the West, as represented, for example, by Tertullian and Cyprian in North Africa and Irenæus in Gaul, never seems to have dreamt of doubting the eternal existence of Christ. From the very first in the earliest forms of the Apostles' Creed Christ is described as the υἱὸς μονογενής, or as the "Filius unicus." There was no unitarian suggestion whatsoever. Christ's relation to the Father was perfectly unique and implied the eternal existence of

the Son. But in spite of this, Professor Adolf von Harnack in his book on the Creed of the Apostles contends that the credal designation of Christ as "the only-begotten Son of God" does *not* make for Him a claim to pre-existent Sonship, but refers only to the Incarnate Life of Christ.

> "After Nicæa," says Harnack, "these words came to be unanimously believed by the Church to refer to the prehistoric and eternal Sonship of Christ. But to transfer this conception to the Creed is to transform it. It cannot be proved that about the middle of the second century the idea 'only Son' was understood in this sense: on the contrary, the evidence of history conclusively shows that it was not so understood."

These assertions of Harnack have been disproved by Professor H. B. Swete, who shows that the Church of the second century unanimously and categorically affirmed the pre-existence of Christ. Justin Martyr, for example, states (*Dialogue with Trypho*, 105): "He (Christ) was the only-begotten of the Universe, inasmuch as He was after a peculiar manner produced from the Father as His Word and Power." So also the Apology of Aristides states: "The Son of God most High is confessed . . . as having come down from heaven." Ignatius in several passages in his Epistles shows that to him

the term "Son of God" implied the pre-existence of Christ. Origen, *circa* 230 A.D., has a more definite statement that "Jesus Christ, our Lord, was born of the Father 'before every creature.'" From these quotations it seems clear that in the Church of the second and third centuries the words "Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord," were understood to mean that Christ was co-equal with the Father and eternally pre-existent. That such was the belief of the Apostolic Church also is clear to any one who studies St. John's Gospel, and especially the Logos doctrine in John i. 1–18, where the eternal pre-existence of Christ is explicitly stated. Similar also is the evidence of the Epistles; for example, Hebrews i. 2 speaks of Christ, "by whom God made the worlds." So also St. Paul speaks of Christ as "the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature: for by Him were all things created . . . all things were created by Him and for Him, and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist" (Col. i. 15–17); and again in 1 Corinthians viii. 6 the Apostle speaks of "one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him." To many modern minds such statements as these present real difficulties. In the first place, it is argued that the very terms used in the Creed "Father" and "Son" surely imply that the Father was prior in

existence to the Son, and that the Son was created by the Father, and is subject to the Father, being inferior to Him in power and authority. If these things be not so, it is said, then the terms " Father " and " Son " become meaningless. They are void of content and the human analogy is no help to us in understanding the nature of God. But to argue thus is to fall into the fallacy of a false literalism—the same error the Roman Catholic Church has fallen into so disastrously in its interpretation of the words of the Sacrament, " This is My Body." That the use of the terms " Father " and " Son " had no such literalistic connotation in New Testament times, and that the metaphor was not to be pressed at every point, is clear from several statements made by Christ Himself preserved for us in the Gospels. From the Gospel of St. John xiv. 9 : " He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father " ; x. 30 : " I and My Father are one." So also Matthew xi. 27 : " No one knows the Son but the Father, nor does any one know the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son shall reveal Him." And again, Jesus says, as recorded in St. John's Gospel, xiv. 11 : " Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me." Therefore it seems impossible to believe that the relation between the Divine Father and His eternal Son is in all respects analogous to the human relation.

The passages just quoted of the sayings of Jesus on His relation to the Father would seem to infer that to the mind of Christ the idea of His Sonship to the Father was devoid of any meaning of generation, or subservience, or that He was in any way inferior to the Father. But rather the Father-Son relation was a metaphor used by Him to express the fact of two Divine Persons, free and equal, bound to one another by the bonds of love, and each functioning freely for the common good. Now if we regard the Father as eternal and non-created, it follows from this relation that the Son is also a Person in the Deity—equally free, eternal, and non-created, of the same substance as the Father. To many Christians who are prepared to give Christ a very high and honourable place, this conception of Him as eternally pre-existing constitutes a supreme difficulty. " They agree that Christ is the highest person that this world has produced, but they are not sure that He is the highest that may yet be produced "—to quote the words of Dr. Orchard. Now this difficulty is due in large measure to many modern minds being under the thraldom of wrong or imperfectly understood ideas of evolution. They point to the history of religion, and try to maintain that it has undergone a process of slow development like everything else. They argue that in primitive

times Man had only the vaguest and most inadequate views of the nature of God—largely inspired by fear of the great unknown forces of Nature; then gradually moral qualities were deified and had their shrines and temples. Zeus became to his worshippers the personification of power, judgment, and enlightenment. Then, through the stages of the tribal and national Deity, man gradually rose to the conception of God as the All-Father, the only God, the God of the whole world. Then in the fulness of time, it is said, came the Son, giving a still more adequate revelation of God's nature. The Son, therefore, they argue, appeared at a certain late period of history, when the evolution of man's religious nature demanded the coming of such a Person, but before that time Christ had no existence. And to these evolutionists the process of development is still going on, so that they look forward to a time when Christ will be superseded by some other Being, higher and more adequate still. The fundamental error in this kind of reasoning is, that it confuses man's thought of God with God Himself. That God must be invariable, unchangeable, "One in whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning"—"the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," is one of the fundamental postulates of all religion. Though Heraclitus, the

Greek philosopher who is the real founder of evolution theories, tried to make change and fluidity the fundamental things in life, yet the human mind cannot rest content with a variable and changing God. Human aspiration demands Some One reliable, eternal, and unchanging with the changing æons of the world, as the God whom alone Man can worship. And the facts of the evolution of the idea of God in the history of religion only show that there has been continuous growth in man's apprehension of the nature of the eternal God; they do not reveal any change in the nature of God Himself. The fact that Christ came to earth as the Incarnate Son of God as soon as ever it was possible for men to understand Him, does not preclude the idea of the Son being eternally existent with the Father. The reception that Christ received, when He did come to earth, veiled in human flesh, and the tragedy in which His career was closed should convince us that He did become Incarnate as soon as possible. And the poor and inadequate following after Him which is all that we can manage after two thousand years of the teaching of His Gospel, which all acknowledge to be the highest teaching in the world, should make it evident that there is but little danger of Christ being superseded by some one greater and better.

But as a matter of fact, the evolutionary theories applied to the nature of God and Christ proceed on altogether wrong premises. They take it for granted that God must be in all respects like Man, subject to the same laws of growth, development, and change, whereas, as we have seen, permanency, reliability, changelessness are the most necessary primary attributes in any adequate conception of God's nature; and if it be argued that these certainly are the attributes of God, but not necessarily of Christ, I would base my belief in the true Deity of Christ on the following philosophical grounds: God must be at least as high and exalted in nature as the noblest conception of Him that has entered into the mind of man. Christ, therefore, must be God, and may legitimately be called God's Son, of the same substance with the Father, for He is by far the highest conception of the nature of God that has entered into the heart and mind of man. To put the argument in a personal form, Christ is my conception of what God is like, fulfilling my highest ideals, and if I could conceive of God apart from Christ, His Son —different in substance or character or nature from Christ His Son—then that God of my imagination would necessarily be an inferior Being to Christ, and therefore no God at all in the true sense of the word. Of course in Christ, as conditioned

by humanity, in Christ known to us in the historical Jesus, His glory is veiled, His essential nature is revealed only through a medium which itself seems to be the negation of Deity. "The Jesus of history is God only as far as He could be God, while He was at the same time also man," as Dr. Orchard has put it.

Wrong thinking about the self-imposed limitations of the incarnate Jesus, wrong thinking about His being conditioned by His humanity, has led to much confusion. We hear it said, Christ cannot be truly and fully God, for God is omniscient and Christ was not—God is more powerful than Christ, because He is omnipotent and Christ was not. Now, as already pointed out, there is a way of looking at omnipotence and omniscience that means a denial of the nature of God. If we take omnipotence to mean that God can and may be a murderer—that God used His freedom from all restraints and limitations deliberately to murder His only-begotten Son on Calvary, then the God of our imagining—the God capable of such a deed—is a far lower Being than Christ—a Being utterly unworthy of our worship and adoration. In fact we are driven to the conclusion that anything that contradicts the conception of Divine power and wisdom as we see them revealed in Christ cannot enter into our conception of Deity at all. Other-

wise the God of our thinking will be a lower Being than Christ Himself. In other words, the Father must have the same nature as the Son, the same moral purposes, the same self-imposed limits to His freedom, in that His nature is perfect love. Hence the great paradox of the Christian faith that the New Testament tells us of on almost every page—that it is the glory of the eternal God that shines for us in the face of Jesus Christ, and that Christ crucified is to us the revelation of the very power of God and the wisdom of God —is no longer to us an insoluble riddle. In this matter we are on the horns of a dilemma. Either Christ crucified is for us the very power of God and the wisdom of God—the exhibition of Divine Omnipotence at its highest and of Divine Wisdom at its greatest, so that Christ crucified becomes to us the revelation of what true Deity is—the proof to us that the love we cast ourselves upon as our final hope, the wisdom we look to, for justice tempered by mercy, must be that which has drawn us sinners to Christ—the proof that these things are in the nature of the eternal God. *Or else*, we must see in Christ crucified a stumbling-block, as the Jews did, or foolishness, as the Greeks did, and therefore we must regard Christianity as the most terrible mistake ever perpetrated in the world. There is no half-way house. If you look

upon Christ's crucifixion, not as the voluntarily endured suffering of the Son of God, but somewhat as you look on the death of Socrates, as the death of a very great and good man who paid the penalty of his greatness by being done to death by those who did not understand him, then you have to abandon all thought of love being at the heart of God, and substitute for the thought of a loving God the thought of One who has no interest at all in humanity, a God so far removed from this world, that what happens in the affairs of men can have not the slightest interest for Him. In fact, it is a case of "All or nothing." Jesus Christ must either be to us the Son of God, the revelation of God's power and wisdom, or else He must be a far-from-perfect man, who made great promises of a Kingdom of God, and then died as a malefactor, His promises all unfulfilled, His power held up to derision in the reed for a sceptre and the garland of thorns for a crown, while the bystanders jeered, "He saved others: Himself He cannot save."

And further, if our fundamental conception of the nature of God is that God is love, that conception necessarily implies that there should be more than one Person in the Godhead, or, in other words, it implies the eternal existence of the only-begotten of the Father. For, if God is love, from

all eternity there must have been some Being like unto Himself to reciprocate His love. If God is love, what is it that He loved in the untold ages before the worlds were made, whom did He love in the millennia that passed ere ever there was a living thing? Is love conceivable as existent alone and by itself in the primeval silences? It is not enough to say that God expressed His love in the world of His creation—because that is not eternal, and besides at best such love would not be true love, but love of one's self, or of one's own handiwork. The very idea of love demands the giving forth to another person, free and equal with one's self, and a reciprocal receiving from the other person. There must be no compulsion on either side. There must be no tyranny, no oppression, no subjugation, or the love is not perfect. Therefore, if God is love, there must have been in the Godhead from all eternity at least two Persons, co-eternal and co-equal, of personalities completely distinct and differentiated from each other, each having His own function to perform, and both being necessary to complete the idea of Godhead at its highest, that God is love.

And here too we seem to find a reason apprehensible even by our limited intellects for God's creating the world. The argument cannot be stated better than is done by Dr. Orchard:

> "The idea that the worlds were created in Christ, through Christ, and unto Christ, brings a certain help. The creation of the world becomes a movement on the part of God, not merely to satisfy or to add something to Godhead, but to reproduce for our sakes alone, something already existing in Godhead. It is for *our* self-realisation that the worlds were made, not for God's. With the eternal Christ, the Godhead is complete in itself, and through the eternal Christ there commences the movement which is to give to creatures that glory and love which were His."[1]

The thought of the Eternal Christ, especially when it is completed by the thought of the Holy Spirit, helps us to think of God in such a way that we can hold that there is something in our personality and in human society which is not the contradiction of Godhead, but its earthly image. All this means that our hopes, both for ourselves and for society, are anchored in ultimate reality.

But the idea of the Eternal Christ requires to be supplemented by the idea of the Incarnate Christ. Now it is usually said that it was man's sin and the necessity of finding a way to man's salvation that necessitated the Incarnation, and God's coming to Man in human form, subject to

[1] *The Necessity of Christ*, pp. 147–148.

all the pains and sorrows of this life. But after all, that is but a half-truth. Philosophically considered, there were other reasons of even greater weight that made the Incarnation of Christ a necessity. The necessity for the Incarnation lies in the very nature of humanity and in the very nature of the struggles, the aspirations, the faith, the hope, and the love that are characteristic of human personality. Think for a moment of a God of all knowledge, dwelling in everlasting light, having power to do as He pleased, having everything He could desire or want guaranteed to Him by virtue of His omnipotence and omniscience. Think of the God of Nature who by the fiat of His will established all physical laws, and who by His very omnipotence can never know what real temptation or struggle is, or can never know what it is to fight against adverse forces. And think of the life of man a continued struggle upward against opposing hosts, a story of painful creeping forward against tremendous odds throughout the ages, a story of "welcoming each rebuff that makes earth's smoothness rough, each sting that bids nor sit nor stand, but go"—a story of frequent falls, constant temptations to choose the easy way rather than the hard way—the story of hours of darkness and depression, of doubts and despairs, relieved by hours of the sunshine of faith and the

promising dawns of hope—the story of this strange and wondrous conflict ended by the stillness and apparent defeat of death. Is there not something ineffably nobler, grander, more awe-inspiring in that picture of struggling and conquering humanity than in the picture of the untroubled omniscient and omnipotent Deity, ignorant alike of human suffering and of human sin? And irresistibly the thought arises—Would it not be more God-like in God to surrender these powers and advantages, to lay aside His omnipotence and kingliness, and share the toils of our common humanity; to see if, when stripped of all His power and might, nay when overwhelmed by defeat and shame, His call refused, His claims rejected, His love flung back with hate—He would still retain such a God-like character as should impel our love and adoration, our worship and devotion? Nothing but a real Incarnation, God in human flesh, could satisfy the longings of man: none but the Incarnate Christ, a Man who shared all our sorrows and was acquainted with all our griefs, could possibly give to man the proof that God knows us as man, and that the Godhead does not shut itself out from sharing the temptations and sufferings of our common humanity. And an Incarnation that would satisfy the longings of the human soul must be a complete identification of God with man.

God in Christ must become man in a true sense, and be subject to the pains and sorrows, the material needs of sustenance, and all the limitations of humanity. And so if we are to believe in a really Incarnate God, we must give up all Docetic views that Christ, or rather Christ as God, did not really suffer, or that Christ was not really tempted. We must believe that Christ did completely share our human nature, as when He prayed to God, depended on God, and looked to God for all His help. It is, in fact, the real humanity of Christ that is the triumphant proof of His true Deity. Christ's true Incarnation is as essential to a right conception of God as love as is Christ's real pre-existence. From the side of philosophy, therefore, as well as from the overwhelming testimony of Scripture, the Christian evidences go to show not only the reasonableness, but the inevitability of believing "in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord."

CHAPTER V

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

"Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary."

THE manner of Christ's Incarnation, the explanation of how God became man at the birth of Jesus, is given in the Apostles' Creed in the words, "Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary." As we have already shown, the words, "conceived by the Holy Ghost," are a comparatively late addition to the Creed, but its earlier statements as given, for example, in the writings of Irenæus, Tertullian, and other Western Fathers, unanimously express the belief that Jesus was incarnate by the Virgin Mary. They do not specify anything at all about the manner of His conception. So also none of the great Creeds of the Eastern Church earlier than 381 A.D. have any mention of conception by the Holy Ghost. The Creed of Nicæa, 325 A.D., reads in this section, "who for us men and for our salvation, came down and was made flesh and entered humanity." Likewise the Creed of

Eusebius, 325 A.D., has, "who for our salvation was made flesh and lived His life among men." The Creed of Jerusalem, 348 A.D., says simply, "who was made flesh and entered humanity"; and in more expanded form in the Apostolic Constitutions, 350 A.D., we find the words, "who in the last days came down from the heavens, and assumed flesh and was begotten of the Holy Virgin Mary."

But in the year 381 A.D. the Council of Constantinople adopted a revision of the Nicene Creed which makes for the first time in the history of the Church express mention of the Holy Ghost as connected with the birth of Christ. The words in the Creed of Constantinople read: "who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was made flesh of the Holy Ghost and the Virgin Mary, and entered humanity." This is the form in that version of the Nicene Creed used in the Anglican Communion Service. And even in the Athanasian Creed, with all its meticulous care to define the divine and human elements in Christ, there is no mention of conception by the Holy Ghost.

Therefore we are faced by the fact that before the latter part of the fourth century neither Eastern nor Western Christendom found it necessary to make explicit mention of Christ as conceived by

the Holy Spirit, though every form of Creed in East and West strongly insists on the Incarnation of our Lord—that He, being God, became man born from the womb of Mary. Why then were the words, "who was conceived by the Holy Ghost," added about 400 A.D. to the Apostles' Creed? Do they represent a change in the fundamental doctrines of the Western Church, or are they simply an attempt to explain more specifically what was already there? That the latter is the true explanation, it is possible to demonstrate.

1. What do the words, "conceived by the Holy Ghost" mean? It is too often assumed that the words are susceptible of only one meaning, and that a repulsively crude anthropomorphic one, namely, that the conception of the Virgin Mary, while in one sense it might be called a case of parthenogenesis, was really accomplished by the Holy Ghost taking upon Himself the part of the male, and the fruit of this unnatural human-divine intercourse was the procreation of Jesus in the womb of Mary, His mother. But such an exegesis is simply the reading into Christian history of favourite ideas of paganism, and the words of the Creed, properly understood, have no such crude and repulsive meaning. Let us look at the words in the original Greek. They are *τὸν συλληφθέντα ἐκ πνεύματος ἁγίου*, "conceived of Holy Spirit,"

πνεῦμα being *without* the article. Further on in the Creed the words about belief in the Holy Spirit as a Person—the Third Person in the Trinity—are these: πιστεύω εἰς τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, where πνεῦμα is written *with* the article. Now the insertion or omission of the definite article with πνεῦμα signifies a wide difference in meaning. It is an established fact of scholarship that πνεῦμα ἅγιον without the article is a very different concept from τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον with the article inserted. For example, Dr. Abbott Smith, in the latest Greek Lexicon of the New Testament, says: "The article as a rule is used when the Spirit is regarded as a Person or a Divine Power, and omitted when the reference is to an operation, influence, or gift of the Spirit." Professor Blass (*Grammar of New Testament Greek*, sections 46:7) remarks on the same difference of usage: "τὸ ἅγιον πν. is used sometimes to a certain extent personally, and then with the article: sometimes for the God-like spirit moving in man, and then without an article." What is stated thus cautiously to be a general rule by these scholars, others would describe as an invariable rule throughout the New Testament, all the different New Testament writers observing the same distinction in usage of the article with πνεῦμα. Applying these conclusions of scholarship to this contested clause, it should be inter-

preted as meaning "who was conceived *under the influence* of Holy Spirit." That is to say, what the Creed affirms is that the Incarnation of our Lord was the work of the Holy Spirit. But that the Holy Ghost was the generator, or that the Holy Ghost as a Person was involved except as an inspirational influence, the Apostles' Creed does not assert. And the addition of the words, "conceived by the Holy Ghost," does not appear to indicate any alteration or addition to the Church's belief in Christ's real Incarnation, but only a desire to explain that that Divine event took place directly under the Divine inspiration of the Holy Spirit. And this interpretation of the words is in accordance with the best interpretation of the evidences of Scripture.

Let us examine the New Testament statements on the matter. In the first place, we notice that, just as in the Creed, the insertion of any mention of the conception by the Holy Spirit is late in finding a place in Christian records of the Belief, so is it comparatively late to appear in Scripture. St. Mark, the earliest Gospel, knows nothing of it, and St. Paul, in all his writings, makes no mention of Christ as "conceived by the Holy Ghost," though it is characteristic of the Apostle that he dwells much on the works of the Holy Spirit. His references to the Birth of Christ all speak of Him as one who "was

born of the seed of David, according to the flesh." Now Paul emphatically believes in the Incarnation, and in his Epistle to the Romans makes an elaborate distinction between "Christ, according to the flesh, who was born of the seed of David," and the same Christ according to His Divine nature "who was a son of God according to the Spirit which sanctifies, since the time that He arose from the dead" (Rom. i. 4). So also St. John in the Fourth Gospel is a fervent believer in the Incarnation of our Lord, and makes the same clear distinction between His divine and human nature that St. Paul makes. To St. John, Christ is at once the Logos, the pre-existent Word of God become incarnate in Man, and at the same time the human Man of Nazareth who wept at the grave of Lazarus; yet never in the Fourth Gospel is there any mention of His being conceived by the Holy Ghost, nor is the miraculous Birth even referred to. He who maintains so strongly the Divine Sonship of Christ does not in any way support his argument, by bringing forth evidence of the Virgin Birth.

We come next to the two Gospels which give an account of the Birth of Jesus—the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke. These two Evangelists seem to have obtained their information about the birth of Jesus from wholly independent sources, and the narrative of each shows many divergences from

the narrative of the other. For example, St. Matthew says it was Joseph who received the angelic message of the Annunciation of the coming birth of the Saviour, while in St. Luke the whole narrative centres round Mary, and it is to Mary the angel's Annunciation is made. Furthermore, in St. Matthew's Gospel, the account is not even consistent with itself, *e.g.*, Matthew i. 16 says "Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ." And yet Matthew i. 18, 19, 25 clearly indicate that, to the writer of St. Matthew's Gospel, Joseph had nothing to do with the birth, and therefore the genealogy down to Joseph which he has just given is quite irrelevant.

When we turn to St. Luke's Gospel we find another genealogy (Luke iii.) very different from Matthew's genealogy, but agreeing with it in this that it is the descent of Joseph and not Mary that is traced, and Luke's statement is that "Jesus was the son of Joseph," though a glossator has added the words, "ὡς ἐνομίζετο—as was supposed" (Luke iii. 23)—words which could hardly have been in the original, because they would invalidate the whole genealogy. Again, Luke habitually speaks throughout his Gospel of Joseph and Mary as the father and mother of Jesus. Surely this has to be strictly interpreted, just as

we are to interpret the references to Christ's "brothers and sisters" as meaning his real brothers and sisters, and not cousins, as some have striven to maintain in the interests of a mistaken orthodoxy. When we come to examine in detail St. Luke's account of the Virgin Birth, we find that there are only two verses (Luke i. 34, 35) which *might* indicate conception by the Holy Ghost, in the crude anthropomorphic sexual sense, as popularly understood. But surely the true interpretation of these verses is rather to be found in the language of poetry and religious mysticism. They express most beautifully and delicately the Annunciation to Mary by the Holy Spirit that she is to become the mother of the Son of God—"the influence of the Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee"—and in these verses the Holy Spirit is written *without* the article, showing that it is the work of the Spirit, the influence of the Spirit, and not the Spirit as Person that is meant. Of crude materialistic intercourse in the sexual sense there is no word in St. Luke's Gospel, unless it is read into the passage by salacious minds. And obviously the context demands that St. Luke, while he devoutly believed in the miraculous nature of the birth of Christ, directed his thought and reverent adoration rather to the fact that the

Incarnation was only possible through the Holy Spirit cleansing and purifying the souls of both Joseph and Mary "so that the holy thing that should be born should be called the Son of God."

Therefore it is clear that, so far as the Christian evidence of the New Testament goes, we are reduced to the witness of St. Matthew i. in favour of Christ's birth being by parthenogenesis, and even Matthew i. is not consistent with itself. The cruder belief of Matthew as to the Birth of Christ probably originated in the apparent necessity to a portion of the Jewish Christian community of proof that Jesus was the Son of God, by making a crudely materialistic explanation of His humble birth in a Bethlehem stable. On purely historical and critical grounds, therefore, we are justified in interpreting this clause of the Apostles' Creed in the sense I have indicated, and not in the sense which the clause is popularly misunderstood to mean.

After all, the exact physiological nature of the birth of Christ is a matter of comparatively little importance. What is infinitely more worth giving thought to, is the sublime truth emphasised in every form of the Creed, of Christ's Incarnation, of His being really God and really Man—and yet One Person throughout. And there need be no difficulty about the universal voice of tradition

that Jesus was born of the *Virgin* Mary. Surely the highest and sublimest meaning to be attached to these words is that given by St. Luke, that the Annunciation of the Birth was given to Mary when she was Virgin, and that it was as a pure and spotless Maid, and under the direct inspiration and influence of the Spirit of God, that the Son of God was conceived in her womb. And the perpetuation of the name Virgin Mary is a constant reminder of the greatness of the miracle, that God should become incarnate, being born after the flesh from the womb of a woman.

For historical and critical reasons, as I have indicated, we must hesitate before pronouncing dogmatically as to the exact manner of Christ's conception. But from the side of theology and philosophy, it is far easier to understand Christ's true humanity, and especially His true Divinity, if we think of Him as being born after the flesh. Surely it is no degradation of Him who turned the criminal's cross to a throne of glory that He should enter the world as the offspring of the pure and undefiled union of God-filled, God-inspired, God-sealed man and woman. The Festival of the Birth of Christ has to me the holiest and tenderest significance, because I think of Jesus Christ, the Son of God become Incarnate, sanctifying human birth, purifying it from every taint—just as I think of Him

on the Cross and at the Resurrection, triumphing over defeat, humiliation, and pain, robbing death of its sting and the grave of its victory.

But it may be asked, how then did Matthew's account originate, an account of the Birth of Christ that has caused so much trouble to sincere Christians in the later ages of the Church's history? Historically we do not know. From what tradition or written source he obtained his information is completely unknown. But philosophically we can surmise how his version of the Virgin Birth in its crude and popular form took its origin. Here two forces were at work, the one psychological, the other dogmatic, tending to accentuate the materialistic view of the Virgin Birth of Christ. Let us consider first the psychological process.

Nowhere in life is man more conservative than in religion, and even when advances are made in religion there is constantly the danger of the popular mind harking back to its discarded beliefs in a disguised form. The popular worship of the Breton peasantry of to-day is a good example of this. Throughout Brittany, under the ægis of the Roman Church, are to be found rites and practices that are really the old paganism in disguise—the worship of sacred wells and sacred stones—the sacrifice at a certain shrine by young women of their locks of hair at a certain festival—and most

pointedly at Carnac, where a battered torso of the pagan Aphrodite is still worshipped as the Virgin Mary. So also certain features of the ancient mystery religions persist in the emotional types of evangelical Christianity, and George Bernard Shaw in his preface to *Major Barbara* points out the close similarity between the music of certain Greek Corybantic odes, connected with the celebration of pagan mystery religions, and some of the ranting, stimulating, nerve-racking hymns of the extreme revivalistic order. So also Professor Kay in his recently published Croall Lectures points out the close resemblance between the wailing, quavering monotone charged with emotion at a Communion service of the Free Presbyterian Church in Scotland, and the wail of the Dervish in his religious devotion to Islam. So also there have been constantly in the history of religion lapsings back to the idea of miraculous conception, as the result of divine-human intercourse, materialistically understood, to explain the founders of the world's great religions. Such a conception was a commonplace of pagan religion and mythology. For example, Æneas was the son of the human Anchises and the divine Venus, Orpheus the offspring of Apollo and the Muse Calliope, and the sons of Atreus, Achilles, and Agamemnon were of semi-divine origin. The

tendency of the primitive mind is to exalt those persons it regards as divine, by describing them as the scions of divine-human intercourse. Professor Max Müller in his *Physical Religion* has shown that the Gautama Buddha and the prophet Mohammed had each such a physically miraculous birth attributed to them by their followers within a hundred years of their respective deaths, whereas we know that both these founders of religion came into this world in the ordinary way. The same psychological trend of thought produced all the hopeless exaggerations and absurdities of the Apocryphal Gospels. The popular mind loves to get hold of something material, in place of some spiritual truth that is so much harder to understand. We see the same process at work in the tendency to materialise the eschatological teaching, and in the gross materialism of the Transubstantiation view of the Holy Communion.

So also the popular mind has sought to reduce the spiritual mystery of the Incarnation to material terms, by narrating the crude story of conception by the Holy Ghost, as it is in St. Matthew's Gospel. No one had a firmer grasp of the truth of the Incarnation than St. Paul—but because St. Paul was spiritually minded he was never tempted to sidetrack into fruitless discussions of the manner in which the Holy Spirit intervened in the conception

of Christ. We may well be content with the faith in the Incarnation of the Apostle Paul, which is reflected in the language of the Apostles' Creed, when properly understood, namely, that Christ was conceived by Mary, under the direct influence or overshadowing of the Holy Spirit.

2. The second great influence that promoted the growth of the idea of Christ's Birth as being no human birth, but a parthenogenesis, or rather a birth from one human and one Divine parent, was the dogmatic outlook of the Church in the early centuries. It is argued in traditional theology, and the argument is found in some of the early Fathers, that the sinlessness of Jesus can only be preserved by such a miraculous break in the hereditary taint of man's original sin as might be accomplished by a Virgin Birth in this material sense. As it is in the Calvinistic theology of the Shorter Catechism: "The covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself, but for his posterity, all mankind descending from him by ordinary generation sinned in him and fell with him in his first transgression." But surely there is something Manichean in such a conception, for it implies that there is something inherently sinful in the normal and ordinary process of generation. And so, if such ideas be held, the Birth of Christ, instead of sanctifying all birth, degrades human

conception and birth as being things so polluted that the Son of God, who could endure the Cross, could not undergo the contamination of it. And on the other hand it is urged that, if Jesus was born of Joseph and Mary under the direct influence of the Holy Spirit, then the taint of original sin must necessarily have been in Him. Surely this is a most extraordinary and Jewish way of limiting the power of God—to say that God could not become incarnate by way of human birth—that God could not bring into the world a sinless being by ordinary generation, because the Book of Genesis says, or is supposed to say, that because of Adam's sin, all men must inevitably bear the taint. It is precisely analogous to the argument of the Jews, who found in the Cross of Christ a stumbling-block because the Law of Moses said, "Accursed is he that hangeth upon a tree." Therefore, they argued, the fact of Christ's crucifixion is proof of His being accursed of God.

But it is utterly false to say, as many modern theologians are agreed, that the ordinary process of generation in itself brings inevitably the taint of hereditary sin. We have to face the fact of the sinfulness of the race, but to say that that sinfulness is perpetuated by the ordinary processes of generation is to become entirely materialistic in outlook, and to fall into the heresy of Mani, to

which St. Augustine for a time was a victim, but which the Church rightly condemned. If the theology of John Calvin and the Westminster Divines in this respect were true, then surely it would be the duty, not only for the clergy to remain celibate as the Church of Rome demands, but for every God-fearing citizen to refrain from marriage and from the procreation of children, that the sinfulness of the world might be brought to an end. But surely the Gospel of Christ who taught, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto Me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven," negatives everywhere such a dismal pessimism. Just as Jesus Christ could be crucified as a felon, and not be accursed of God, but turn the shame of the Cross into glory, so I believe that Jesus could be born sinless of Joseph and Mary under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and so sanctify for all time the process of human generation that had been thought to be accursed of God, and regarded as inevitably doomed to hand on for ever the taint of hereditary sin.

But further, it may be argued, if a materialistic Virgin Birth is necessary to break the chain of hereditary sin, does the taint not still come through the Mother being conceived in sin herself? Can the chain be really broken, if Christ, though He had no human Father, had a human Mother who

was herself by heredity attainted with original sin? The Roman Catholic Church has felt the urgency of this argument so strongly that, as late as the year 1854, the Pope added by solemn decree the belief in the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, as a dogma necessarily to be accepted by all the faithful in the Roman Church, if they would attain to salvation. But why should the dogma stop there? If sin comes in by this mechanical process, should not the Roman Church logically proceed further and proclaim all the ancestors of the Virgin Mary to be immaculately conceived, so that they might be pure and undefiled vessels conveying no taint of sin to the Divine and Sinless One, who was to be born in the fulness of time? But surely our thought of the sinlessness of our Lord does not depend on such things at all. Surely it was possible for Christ, the sinless Son of God, to become incarnate in the womb of Mary, by ordinary generation, but under the power and influence of the Holy Spirit, and so to become what He was to St. Paul, "God and Man in two distinct natures—yet the same Person for ever."

Therefore, to sum up the Christian evidences, we conclude (1) that this clause in the Creed does not refer to a materialistic conception by the Holy Ghost, but to a spiritual event, the birth of

Christ being brought about, and His Incarnation achieved, by the power of the Holy Ghost, transforming humanity so that in a true sense the Son of God could be as St. Paul describes Him (Gal. iv. 4), "made of a woman, made under the law." (2) We conclude that belief in the Incarnation of our Lord does not depend on the physical or material manner of His conception, but on the great spiritual fact of the Holy Spirit's influence and action. (3) We conclude that the sinlessness of Jesus is quite independent of the manner of His birth, and is easier to understand on far higher grounds than those of the physiological manner of His generation.

But we must recognise that there are many acute theologians who refuse to accept these conclusions, and who regard belief in a physiological Virgin Birth as a vital necessity for the Christian faith. The late Professor Orr of Glasgow in his book on the Virgin Birth puts all his argument from this point of view most cogently, and more recently Dr. Orchard in his *Theology of Jesus* has come round to the same position, though for years he held the position of most modern theologians that the exact manner of the conception by the Holy Ghost, whether spiritual or not, was not a vital question for the Christian faith. Dr. Orchard is a devout believer in the true Deity of Christ, His eternal pre-existence and His Incarnation, but

he maintains that to understand the Incarnation we must presuppose a Virgin Birth in the physical and material sense. To quote his words:

> "In order to reconcile Man to God the Divine Person must live a truly human life, within the normal limitations of a human body, mind and soul; so that while the person is absolutely Divine, the life is a truly human achievement. But the ordinary method of generation produces a new person. If therefore there had been the ordinary method of generation, we should have had two persons, entailing dual personality, with nothing higher to unite: for person is the highest category of being. Either the one person would have to be destroyed, or suppressed, or absorbed by the other." [1]

Now here, it seems to me, Orchard is falling into the same error as the older theologians in trying to lay down the law as to the limits of Divine power. Why should it be *impossible* for the Eternal Christ to become Man by ordinary generation? Why should it not be possible for the Babe of Bethlehem to be at once the human child and the Eternal God Incarnate? Besides, in the passage just cited, Orchard pleads for a true humanity for our Lord in every respect. Could there be such a

[1] *The Theology of Jesus*, pp. 74–75.

complete humanity, if He came into the world in a manner physically different from ordinary generation? Is it really necessary to maintain, as Orchard thinks, that the one nature would *necessarily* suppress the other? Surely it is not outwith the power of God to become incarnate in Man, in a truly human way, and yet to retain His full and complete Deity. Surely it is a nobler thing for Christ to become incarnate as the result of such a stupendous spiritual miracle of the Holy Spirit, as I have tried to describe, than that He should have come into the world as the result of a merely physical miracle. As my guide to the understanding of the Incarnation, I go back to St. Paul and to the confession of belief in Christ which he makes at the beginning of the Epistle to the Romans (i. 3, 4), and believe in "His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness." And the words about the Birth of Christ in the Apostles' Creed are, I feel convinced, simply an attempt to interpret this noble view of the Incarnation of Christ held by the great Apostle to the Gentiles.

CHAPTER VI

THE DEATH OF CHRIST

"Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried."

AT first sight it seems strange and anomalous that the Apostles' Creed, in its early as in its later forms, makes a sudden leap from its statement of the manner of the birth of Christ, to the statements concerning His death. One would have expected some mention in the Creed of His teaching—but that is given further on after the belief in the Holy Trinity has been stated,—or one would have expected mention of His instituting the Sacraments, or of His Baptism in Jordan, or of His Temptation in the wilderness, or of His Transfiguration on the Mount, or of the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem, or of the miracles He wrought, or of His choice of the Twelve Apostles, and of many other things that seem to us to be of primary importance in the earthly career of Jesus. But the Creed goes straight from the Birth to the Death of Christ, and the reason probably is that it is the briefest possible summary of the essentials

of the Christian faith, and can only include the salient facts about the historical Jesus. The leap from Christ's birth to His sufferings and death is not only characteristic of the Apostles' Creed, but is found exactly in the same way in the great Creeds of the Eastern Church—the symbols of Nicæa and of Jerusalem.

The words in which belief in the Death of Christ is expressed in the Apostles' Creed are of the utmost significance. "Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried." In all forms of the Creed, the Roman procurator is mentioned by name because by that means a definite date can be given to the Crucifixion chronologically, and, as we have already seen, the suffering of Christ under Pontius Pilate is the one historical incident in the career of our Lord that is known to, and commented on, by the secular historians Josephus and Tacitus. It is interesting to notice that none of the credal statements in the writings of the Fathers before 200 A.D. have any mention of the Death of Christ at all. It must have seemed to them that a fact that was blazoned forth throughout the New Testament, a fact of which they were reminded everywhere and always by the symbol of the Cross, so lavishly used by the Early Church, was too elementary to enter into any statement of belief. The whole of the Christian Church and Christian

worship centres round the Crucifixion. The Gospel is the teaching of the crucified Saviour. These things to the primitive Church were so self-evident, apparently, that it was not thought necessary to emphasise them in a credal statement, though, as we have seen, they form the very marrow of the doctrinal sermons of the Apostles, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. Among the Fathers, Tertullian, *circa* 200 A.D., is the earliest to give a statement of this clause of the Creed substantially in its later form. But it is not till the time of Marcellus, *circa* 340 A.D., and Rufinus, *circa* 400 A.D., that the statement, "crucified under Pontius Pilate, and buried," forms part of the credal statement of the Western Church. The insertion of the word "dead" is of still later date —for although it occurs in some statements of the "Rule of Faith" of Tertullian, and in statements by Origen, the word is not inserted even into the later Creeds of Marcellus and Rufinus, and first begins to make a fairly regular appearance after 400 A.D., until it was finally incorporated in the Creed of Pirminius, 700 A.D. As we have already noted, it was probably the rise of Docetic and other heresies which denied the reality of the Death of Christ, that caused the insertion of the word "dead" into the Creed between 400–500 A.D. For though these heretics believed that Jesus was

crucified and buried, yet they taught that He was buried alive in the rock-hewn chamber in a state of insensibility through the exhaustion of suffering. Recovering on the third day from His swoon, they further taught, He rolled away the stone from the door of the tomb, and appeared in the Garden to Mary and the others—not as the Christ of the Resurrection, but as the human Jesus who had never really died. It was to correct errors of this sort that the word "dead" was added to the Apostles' Creed, some time in the fifth century. But the heresy that Jesus did not really die lives on in this twentieth century.

Mr. George Moore, a few years ago published a novel in which St. Paul is pictured as meeting a hermit in a desert place. The hermit is a frail and almost speechless shadow of a man. He is Jesus: a paralysed soul in a shattered body, for the disciples had taken down the bleeding and insensible body of their Lord from the Cross and, after He had recovered, they had secreted Him in this secret cell. The shudder that involuntarily passes through us as we read such a perverse romance is a sure guide to the truth. We feel, quite apart from the incontrovertible facts of history, that somehow Christ had to die. The world that made Socrates drink the poison cup of hemlock would not suffer the Son of Man to

escape. The death of Jesus is most abundantly testified to by history, and it is as profitless to argue that in spite of the witness of the New Testament and the witness of Josephus and Tacitus, Christ did not really die, as it is profitless to listen to those romancers who say that Lord Kitchener and Mr. Parnell, the Irish Nationalist, did not really die.

Accepting, then, the Death of Christ as recorded in the Creed as an historical fact, we notice first that in the statement about Christ's death in that symbol, there is no hard-and-fast theory of the Atonement, no mention of the elaborate hypotheses of later days that the Death of Christ was eternally preordained, part of the inevitable purpose of God. We find no statement in the Apostles' Creed that Christ had to die to satisfy Divine justice, or to placate an offended Deity, or that Christ had to be sacrifiecd to pay the debt of men's sin. All the wrappings of theology that have been woven around the death of Christ from the days of St. Paul to the days of Denney and Rashdall are absent from the plain, blunt, historical statements of the Creed. But that is not to suppose that the Early Church, that framed the Apostles' Creed, had no explanation to offer of the Cross, or that the Apostolic Church did not connect the Cross of Christ with Redemption. In

fact, the very reverse is true; for an examination of the sermons of the Apostles in Acts and of the teaching of St. Paul in his Epistles shows that the explaining of the meaning and significance of the Crucifixion was the constant theme of the Apostles' preaching to Jew and Gentile alike. It was precisely this preaching of the Cross, and salvation by the Cross as the central theme of the Church's faith, that roused the opposition to the Apostles of both the Jewish and the pagan world. An examination of the statements and experiences of St. Paul will perhaps indicate the attitude of the Apostolic Church to the Atonement, and help to interpret what meaning the primitive Church gave to the simple words in this section of the Creed. In the beginning of his First Epistle to the Corinthians, St. Paul gives a confession of what the Death of Christ meant for him, which might be taken as typical of the confession of all the Apostolic Church, and which enables us to understand the difficulties the Early Church experienced in persuading both Jew and pagan that Christ crucified was the very Son of God revealing His redemptive love for man. In 1 Corinthians i. 23, 24, St. Paul says, "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, *the power of God, and the wisdom of God.*" A

proper understanding of these words will lead us to appreciate the immense significance of the Death of Christ to the framers of the Apostles' Creed.

The whole of philosophy, in ancient as in modern times, might be described as the endeavour to discover and rightly interpret what St. Paul in this passage calls "the power of God and the wisdom of God." In the ancient world as the Apostle knew it, there were two great cultured nations, the Jews and the Greeks, who had sought to solve the riddle of the Universe and to discover the secret of the power of God and the wisdom of God in very different ways, according to the peculiar genius and the religious and intellectual outlook of each race. Jewish philosophy had sought to describe the Semitic mind's idea of God's power and wisdom by picturing the chosen people as an ideal community, ruled over by an ideal autocratic monarch, a Messianic Prince, gifted and enriched by a beneficent God with every grace and favour. As one of the great prophets has described Him: "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth

even for ever."[1] This Messianic Prince was to be the embodiment of the power and wisdom of God, because He would yield an implicit obedience to the Almighty Deity whose bond-servant He was —and a similar unquestioning obedience will He demand from the people over whom He rules. Merciless shall He be in His tyranny over His own people, and still more so, over other nations that come under His sway. The Psalmist says of Him, "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."[2] Thus, though the Jewish ideal was a theocratic state—their conception of the power of God was largely limited to material power, and their thought of the wisdom of God was akin to the wisdom of the tyrant. And just because Jesus Christ had so grievously disappointed their hopes that He might be the expected Messianic Prince, just because His idea of the power of God and the wisdom of God had been so different from theirs, in their chagrin they had cried out that He be crucified.

It was a very different conception of the power and wisdom of God that the Greeks had developed under successive schools of thinkers, and that Aristotle had brought to its highest pitch of perfection. Their notion of the power and wisdom of

[1] Isa. ix. 6–7. [2] Ps. ii. 9.

God had not the strong ethical content of the Jewish belief. They rather thought power and wisdom were to be seen in the artistic and harmonious development of all human things, so that there should be nothing deficient and no excess, but all life should be a harmonious whole. The Greeks judged life as a work of Art; actions were to be regarded as "beautiful" or "ugly"—not as right or wrong. The man who is wise was to them the man who had a sense of moral beauty, who would keep carefully out of sight all the sordid things in life, and their conception of the power of God was the deification of the power of human Reason and Intellect. And though the Stoics had sought to introduce some real ethical ideals into the Greek ideas of power and wisdom, yet their outlook upon life, in St. Paul's day, had become a blind groping after wisdom, and a thirsting after power which they knew in their hearts could never be theirs. Into the proud city of Corinth, where these two very different ideals, the Jewish and the Greek, contended for the mastery, St. Paul by his preaching had thrown a bomb-shell, proclaiming that Christ crucified was the power of God and the wisdom of God. One can well imagine the pained surprise and indignant bewilderment of both Jewish and Greek philosophers in Corinth when they heard the astounding statement. To the

Jews, Paul tells us, this preaching of the crucified Christ was a stumbling-block. To the Jewish philosopher convinced of the Divine mission of his people to lead the world under a mighty Messiah, a political leader who should rule with a rod of iron, the words must have seemed the rankest blasphemy. Had not Jesus Christ been condemned as an impostor by their own high priests in Jerusalem? Had He not been convicted by their own supreme court, the Sanhedrim, of having uttered the most impious blasphemies, proclaiming that He was the King of the Jews and the promised Messiah? How could this Paul, himself a Jew, dare to proclaim that the Crucified Jesus, executed legally by the supreme court of his people, was the Messiah—the very power of God and the wisdom of God—when the very law of Moses proved the absolute impossibility of such a thing being true? Did not the Law of Moses clearly state, "He that is hanged (or crucified) is accursed of God"?[1] Paul himself, by preaching that this crucified felon is the power of God and the wisdom of God, is laying himself open to the charge of blaspheming against the deepest religious convictions of his fellow-countrymen.

To the Greeks of Corinth, on the other hand, the preaching by Paul of Christ crucified, as the power

[1] Deut. xxi. 23.

of God and the wisdom of God, must have seemed sheer madness. Where was the wisdom? Was Jesus not a carpenter's son from Nazareth—a Jewish peasant, who had never entered one of their academies of learning? He belonged to none of their philosophical schools. And His life — consorting with publicans and sinners, making friends of lepers, and condescending to speak to and to cure those afflicted with unclean spirits, why, there was nothing in that life that they would call wisdom! In fact His whole career seemed to be an exhibition of foolishness. Instead of glossing over and hiding the ugly and sordid things in life, this man, said to have the wisdom of God, delighted apparently in showing the claims on the Divine favour of the down-trodden, the outcast, and the oppressed. The Lazarus lying full of sores at the rich man's gate, He exalted in His teaching above Dives, clothed in purple and fine linen, faring sumptuously every day. How preposterous—how incredibly foolish! And to speak of Him, whose brief career was wisely cut short by the Jews crucifying Him between two thieves on Calvary—to speak of this Christ crucified as being the power of God—could absurdity go further? Power? Could there be a more contemptible exhibition of utter weakness? Dying the most infamous death, deserted by all His friends, all the great promises

of His teaching unfulfilled, the soldiers dicing for the possession of His very clothes, and He, who is called by this Paul "the very power of God," humbly begging of the ribald soldiery a little water to moisten His parched lips—how utterly mad it was to call such an one "the power of God," and what strange delusion must possess the minds of these Christians that they could actually bring themselves to worship such a crucified Christ!

Not only in Corinth, but throughout the whole Greek cultured world were comments like these passed on the incredible folly of the worshippers of One crucified. Lucian the philosopher, with withering scorn, makes reference to Christ as that sophist "impaled upon a cross," and there still exists in one of the Roman Museums[1] a caricature drawn on the wall of an ancient house on the Palatine Hill, of a slave bowing down to a crucified figure with an ass's head; and underneath runs the inscription in Greek, "Alexamenos worships his God." And yet, Paul had the courage to go to Corinth, into the midst of these æsthetic Greeks and fanatic Jews, and preach Christ crucified in the most challenging and uncompromising way. Guided by a sure religious instinct, he tells us that he determined to know nothing amongst them

[1] Museo Nazionale (Terme di Diocleziano).

save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. He would *not* tell them of the glories of the risen Christ, nor tickle their ears with the marvels of the miracles He did. He would not astonish them with the grandeur of the moral teaching of his Lord, nor incite their wonder by narrating the revelations about spiritual things He had given to men. He preached Christ crucified, the power of God and the wisdom of God. That was the core of the whole thing, and if they grasped the meaning of the Cross, all things else would be added unto them. And the Christian Church, it seems to me, has been guided by a sure instinct, when it made the Cross, and not the Crown, the symbol of its faith. For unless men accept Christ crucified as the very power of God and wisdom of God, they will not be able rightly to comprehend the victory symbolised by the Crown, nor rightly interpret the meaning of the Resurrection. What then did St. Paul mean when he preached Christ crucified as "the power of God and the wisdom of God"? During the whole of His earthly ministry the theme of all Christ's preaching—the mainspring of all His actions—was that He had a new revelation of the power and wisdom of God to give to the world. He taught throughout that God is love, and that the love of God is a power more all-shattering than any power men had

dreamed of. And if men would learn true wisdom, they must come to know what the supremacy of love means. And His whole earthly career was the giving to men an object-lesson of the putting into practice His two great laws—love God, and love your neighbour as yourself. And He made the most astonishing claims for Himself. As being the Incarnate Son of God He claimed for Himself absolutely the first place in love and devotion, transcending the most sacred of earthly ties. And the second astonishing claim He made for Himself is that He Himself is served in all service of humanity. To give a beggar a cup of cold water, to receive a child, to care for those in any kind of distress—all this is actually done to *Him*, because love is the exhibition of God's power and God's wisdom.

And just because God is love and loves men to the uttermost, the Father could not, He dared not, interfere to save His Son, when the sin and perversity of men nailed the innocent Saviour of the world to a criminal's cross. The Cross of Christ was the proof to sinful men that Jesus Christ was the power of God and the wisdom of God, a proof that the message that He brought to the world had in it an explosive power that would shatter to atoms all those forms of power in which human wisdom had put its trust. To quote the

words of a modern writer on the Cross of Christ: "As the flash of a volcano discloses for a few hours the elemental fires at the Earth's centre, so the light on Calvary was the bursting forth through historical conditions of the very nature of the Everlasting. There was a cross in the heart of God before there was one planted on the green hill outside of Jerusalem" (Dinsmore, *Atonement in Literature and Life*, p. 232). And just because, in enduring the Cross, Christ was true unto the end to His own teaching that love is supreme—just because He refused to exert His omnipotent power to escape His fate or to compromise with His accusers, the world was confronted with a new revelation of the wisdom of God that passed all knowledge, and a new insight into the secret of power—the power of God that can make the humanly impossible happen—the invincible power of love.

And Paul, the cultured, educated seeker after power and wisdom, is humbled to the dust when he realises what Christ crucified means—humbled, not by the unimaginable greatness of God, but by the shattering disclosure of the power and wisdom of the God of love. And as it was with St. Paul, so was it with all the Apostles after Pentecost, they had only one theme to preach—Christ crucified and raised from the dead—as the revela-

tion of the true wisdom of God and the revelation of a new way of righteousness and holiness—above all, the revelation of how man can find an escape from the thraldom of his sinful nature into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

And yet there are many who find it difficult to share the Apostles' faith in the crucified Christ. It is a grievous stumbling-block to many that Jesus Christ, Son of the Eternal God, should die at all. There is something incongruous to them in the belief that Jesus, the Incarnation of God, should suffer death on a criminal's cross. Why was it inevitable that Jesus should die—and die such a shameful death ? We have tried to show St. Paul's answer to that question. The thought of modern theology also tends to the conclusion that, with the world steeped in sin as it was, the death of Christ at the hands of His enemies was quite inevitable.

We may put the case briefly thus : The world was faced with the alternative either of accepting the teaching of Jesus about the Kingdom of God and about love as supreme, as the absolute truth and of revolutionising society to make it conform to the teaching of Jesus—or it had to reject that teaching as impious, and get rid of Jesus as a dangerous agitator. With the exception of the small band of faithful disciples, the ancient world would not believe Christ's teaching,

would not believe that He was the Son of the Living God, would not believe that His teaching that love is supreme and unconquerable, was a true doctrine, would not believe that if it came to a really severe test, the principles that Jesus taught would stand the strain. They imagined that all His idealistic teaching about loving one's enemies, about the Kingdom of God, and the salvation of men's souls through the belief in His Gospel of love, would prove to be mere idle words when the time of testing came, and the weakness of this Dreamer would be revealed. And so there developed an unholy coalition of those who refused to accept His teaching, a coalition of parties that hated and loathed one another, united for once to compass the death of Jesus, whom each party feared more than it dared to confess. Caiaphas and the Jewish High Priest party were enraged against Him, because He openly proclaimed that all men were to be admitted to the kingdom of heaven, and that the Jews, the Chosen People, were to have no privileges, no prerogatives. Had He not dared to say that the publicans and harlots would go into the Kingdom of God before them, the priests of Israel, the exclusive privileged class who alone could offer sacrifices to Almighty God ?

And so, filled with rage, they united with their natural enemies, the Roman Imperialists, repre-

sented by Pontius Pilate, the procurator, to have this Jesus put out of the way of doing harm, as they imagined. Pilate's attitude to Jesus as recorded in the Gospels is easy for us to understand. He was the loyal servant of his Imperial Master, and deemed it his duty to rule the province over which he had been set in the interests of Rome. Sedition, rebellion, attempts to stir up the populace against Roman rule must be suppressed with a heavy hand. And so when Jesus is brought before him charged with sedition, he investigates the case, and though he finds the prisoner innocent, and ostentatiously "washes his hands of the whole affair,"[1] yet he is obviously impressed by the vehemence of Jesus' accusers, the more so because they are drawn from a section of the community that hitherto have not been conspicuous in their loyalty to Rome. Therefore, Pilate as a good servant of the Roman State, gives a decision that will apparently give satisfaction all round, and permits Jesus to be crucified.

Not so easy to understand perhaps is the attitude of the third party in the unholy coalition that brought about Jesus' death—the attitude of the common people, the Jerusalem populace, who shouted "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" and as He endured the torments of the Cross, hurled at

[1] Matt. xxvii. 24.

Him their gibes and sneers, saying, "He saved others: Himself He cannot save." Their rage against Him was the anger of disappointed hope—the bitter revulsion of feeling against a leader who had failed to realise what they had expected of Him. They had hoped that it should have been He that should have redeemed Israel by their means and propaganda. They had hoped He would prove to be that political Messiah to whom they looked to rid them of the hated Roman yoke. But His preaching of peace and love, His refusal to take sides in the political struggle, His condemnation of all methods of violence, had filled them with chagrin, so that they allied themselves with both sets of their political opponents, the high priests and the Roman procurator, in having Him put to death as a malefactor. Such a coalition of those who would not accept His teaching was inevitable, because no one could remain indifferent to Him and to the challenge of His Gospel. Men had either to see in Him the very power of God and in His Gospel the very wisdom of God, or else they were bound to suppress Him and His teaching as seditious and blasphemous.

Even at the end, with this coalition of enemies against Him, Jesus might have escaped His death in two ways. (1) He might have recanted,

been false to Himself and to the Father who sent Him. Then would He have escaped death, but would never have been the world's Saviour. Instead, He would have been known to men as the world's greatest impostor, an idealist preaching a fantastic creed, that was found in actual fact not to be workable. (2) He might have used His supernatural powers to escape death. As He Himself said (Matt. xxvi. 53), "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to the Father, and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels?" But if Jesus had thus used His supernatural powers to escape the Cross, He could never have been the Saviour of men. He might have been regarded as a God of terrible might and power, who would by fear and awe win men's hearts. But His could not have been the victory of the Cross, whereby He wins men's love and adoration because they see in the innocent but crucified Jesus the picture of the invincibility of love.

In fact the death of Christ cannot rightly be regarded as an isolated event, standing apart from all His life and teaching, nor can we say that the death of Christ by itself, and considered in any mechanical or merely substitutionary manner, saved men from sin. The Cross was the necessary culmination of His life and teaching.

And the reason why the Cross is made so central a point in all doctrines of salvation and redemption is simply this, that when men had committed the enormous crime of crucifying as a criminal the pure and stainless Son of God, and when the awfulness of the results of their disobedience to Him and of their unbelief in Him began to dawn upon their souls, then in their agony they came to see the meaning of the whole Person and Work of Jesus—that He came into the world and became incarnate "for man's salvation," as the Nicene Creed has it.

The salvation of man was wrought by His life as well as by His death, by His teaching as well as by His suffering, by His resurrection as well as by His humiliation. As Dr. John Hunter has written:

> "Not merely the death on the Cross, but the entire manifestation of the Son of God was, and is, the power of atonement in the life of Jesus Christ."[1]

Or, as Mr. Boyd Scott has expressed it:

> "It was Jesus who saved men and women, not anything He did that can be treated as something apart from Himself. When Christians sing, 'We have heard a joyful sound—Jesus saves!' they sing the truth. When they sing, 'There is a fountain filled with blood,'

[1] Quoted in *Nevertheless We Believe*, p. 64.

> etc., they sing a half-truth which is apt to become superstition and magic."[1]

And if we examine carefully the early credal statements of the Church, we shall find confirmation of the fact that the Apostles and preachers of the Apostolic Age looked upon the death of Christ in this way. In the Apostles' Creed there is no undue emphasis on Christ's death, as if it were the only thing that mattered. But in the Creed, as in the sermons in the Acts of the Apostles, the death is regarded as the necessary culmination of the life. The Creed lays emphasis on what Christ was, and to those who understand what He was, His dying on the Cross can no longer be a stumbling-block, but the heart-shattering revelation to sinful man of the unspeakable love of God.

[1] *Nevertheless We Believe*, p. 65.

CHAPTER VII

THE DESCENT INTO HELL

"He descended into Hell."

THE original Greek for this clause of the Creed is *κατελθόντα εἰς τὰ κατώτατα*—"descendit ad inferna"—*i.e.* "He descended into the lowest places," and this descent is said to have taken place between Christ's burial and resurrection. We have already noticed that these words do not occur in any of the earlier versions of the Apostles' Creed, and were in fact the latest addition of all to that document, making their first appearance in a confessional statement in the Creed of Rufinus of Aquileia, though they do not appear regularly as an integral part of the Western Creed till the beginning of the sixth century. Rufinus is quite conscious of the importance of the addition made by him to the Creed, for, writing about the end of the fourth century, he says, "The words 'He descended into Hell' are not in the Creed of the Church of Rome." So also in the great Creeds of Nicæa and Con-

stantinople, there is no mention of this article. Strange to say, it was at assemblies of Arian Christians held at Sirmium, Nice, and Constantinople in the years 359–360 A.D. that we have the first confessional statement of the Descensus. But in these Arian conciliar deliverances the language describing the descent to Hades is rhetorical, and the idea seems to be that our Lord descended to the abode of departed spirits in order to visit and instruct the patriarchs and prophets of the Old Testament. This idea is common in the writings of the Fathers of the primitive Church. In the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus, written probably in the fourth century A.D., there is a long description of the Descent of Christ to the underworld, where He conversed with Abraham, Isaiah, John the Baptist, and with Adam. He set free the patriarchs and saints from their bondage in Hades, and took them to Heaven, while Satan was cast by Christ into Tartarus. In shorter form reference is made to the Descensus by most of the Apostolic Fathers, by Hermas, Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and Origen.

In all essentials, the teaching of these Fathers is the same. Tertullian, in his treatise *De Anima*, gives the clearest indication of the belief of the primitive Church on this point of eschatology.

According to Tertullian, "no one enters Heaven before the end of the world." Until the Day of Judgment, the dead remain in a kind of intermediate state in Hades, and Christians as well as the patriarchs of the Old Testament must endure this intermediate state. But Tertullian believes that the souls of martyrs do not pass through this intermediate state, but do immediately pass into Paradise. "Nemo enim peregrinatus a corpore statim immoratur penes Dominum, nisi ex martyrii prærogativa, paradiso scilicet, non inferis diversurus" (*De Resurrectione Carnis*, 43). But to Tertullian "Paradise" is a part of the underworld, for he locates the parable of Dives and Lazarus "apud inferos," and even "Abraham's bosom" of that parable (Luke xvi. 22) is not in the final state of the blessed, but among the spirits of Paradise "apud inferos." So that the work that Christ accomplished for the Old Testament patriarchs, by His descent into Hades, might be described somewhat after the manner of Dante, of lifting them from a lower to a higher region in this abode of departed spirits. Irenæus shares the view that the martyrs escape the rigours of the intermediate state, but Irenæus emphatically denies that the souls of Christians when they leave the body do straightway ascend "in super cœlestem locum." If we try to summarise the somewhat obscure statements of the Fathers between 150–400

A.D. on this subject, their belief would appear to be that Christ descended into the underworld—the abode of departed spirits—after His death, and preached to the saints and patriarchs of the Old Testament, delivering them from being confined in those lower parts of Hades, from which Christians, and especially martyred Christians, were afterwards exempted, and that Christ conveyed these saints to Paradise, or the higher part of Hades, whither believing Christians would go immediately after death.

The origin of the whole conception of these early Fathers is to be found in several passages in the New Testament, notably in two passages in the First Epistle of Peter. 1 Peter iv. 6, "For this cause was the Gospel preached also to them that are dead (*καὶ νεκροῖς εὐηγγελίσθη*), that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit." The other passage is 1 Peter iii. 18, 19, "Christ being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: by which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison." The proper exegesis of these two passages has been much disputed, and the latter passage, strictly interpreted as the context shows, would limit Christ's preaching in Hades to the generation who perished in the Flood. But the origin of the belief is not to be found so much

in these statements of 1 Peter, which are not quoted by the earliest Fathers in support of their doctrine of the Descensus; but rather the origin of the clause goes back to a tradition of the Church, afterwards elaborated in the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus, founded perhaps on the statement of Matthew xxvii. 52, "And the graves were opened: and many bodies of the saints which slept arose"—that Christ between His death and resurrection made Himself known to the spirits of the departed of the Old Testament times, in the days when He remained in the state of the dead.

Nevertheless, the earliest Catholic Creed that had any mention of the Descensus was the Creed of Aquileia, which simply has the words "descendit *in infernum*," a statement which can be supported by Scriptural texts. For example, St. Peter in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost, as reported in Acts, had quoted concerning Christ the statement of Psalm xvi. 10, "Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption." But in order to understand such statements as these, we must know something of the Hebrew conception of Sheol or Hades which seems to have been taken over by the primitive Church. In Old Testament theology of the later period Sheol is not the grave, nor Hell in the usually accepted sense, but the abode of departed

spirits where the dead have a shadowy and colourless existence. And the way thither was thought of as a descent because, to quote the words of Dr. Swete (*The Apostles' Creed*, p. 60): "Since the body was committed to the depths of the earth, it was natural to associate the condition of the dead with the thought of an underworld, and to speak of a descent into Sheol." St. Paul evidently shared this belief, for he says, "Who shall descend into the abyss, that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead?" (Rom. x. 7), where τὴν ἄβυσσον seems to be the equivalent of Sheol, the underworld of departed spirits. So also Ephesians iv. 9, "And He that ascended, who is He but He that descended into the lowest parts of the earth?" (εἰς τὰ κατώτερα μέρη τῆς γῆς). So also Paul describes Christ as having dominion over the underworld (Phil. ii. 10), "To Jesus every knee shall bow . . . of those under the earth." But although Paul had thus a clear conception of Christ's descent into Hades, as had also the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, for in chapter xi. of that Epistle are cited numerous Old Testament saints who all died in the faith, not having received the promise, "God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect" (Heb. xi. 40), yet such a conception did not appear as an integral part of the Creed till the

fourth century. Why this clause was introduced, we can only surmise. It may be that the words were inserted just as we saw the word "dead" was inserted, to meet Docetic heretics who denied that Christ in a real sense died at all. From the Creed of Aquileia the clause of the Descensus made its way into the Creed of the Western Church, in the symbols used by Rome and by the Gallican and Spanish Churches, though in Gaul it does not occur till the sixth century. It was also inserted into the Creed of Athanasius.

The difficulty of giving a proper interpretation to the clause is revealed by the wide discrepancy in the exposition given in the theologies of the great Churches of Christendom. In the Eastern Church, the clause does not enter into the confessional Creeds, and the subject therefore is for the most part ignored in the theology of the Greek Church. Regarding the question of the destination of the souls of the departed between their death and the Day of Judgment, the theologians of the Greek Church generally follow the tradition of the primitive Church, and regard the souls of Christians as abiding in Hades—the good passing immediately to "Paradise," a state of provisional salvation, and the evil to "Gehenna," a state of provisional punishment, from which they may be transferred to "Paradise" before the Last Judg-

ment. Such a transference from the lower division of Hades to "Paradise" in this restricted sense was affected by Christ for the Old Testament saints, by His going to preach "to the spirits that were in prison."

A much more definite doctrine of the Descensus is given in the theology of the Roman Catholic Church. Like the early Fathers and the Greek Church, Roman theologians conceive that "Paradise" can be in Hades, and postulate a state of existence called "Limbo" or "Limbus patrum," where Christ could be with the departed who had died before Christ's coming. The Roman Catholic Catechism explains the "descent into Hell" in this wise. "By the words 'He descended into Hell' I mean that as soon as Christ was dead, His blessed soul went down into that part of Hell called Limbo. By Limbo I mean a place of rest where the souls of the just who died before Christ were detained. The souls of the just were detained in Limbo because they could not go up to the Kingdom of Heaven till Christ had opened it for them." Thus Roman Catholic theology tries to perpetuate under the name "Limbo" the idea of the Hebrew Sheol—an idea abandoned by all Protestant theologians. But the Roman Catholic theologians find two great difficulties in their doctrine of the Descensus—(1) How can Christ's descent to Hades

be reconciled with the doctrine that He remained in repose in the sepulchre till the Resurrection morning? (2) How is it to be reconciled with His saying to the penitent thief (Luke xxiii. 43), "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise"? The *Catechismus Romanus* seeks to get rid of the first difficulty by maintaining that after Christ's death, "His soul descended to Hades and there remained, while His body was in the sepulchre. But the person of Christ was at the same time in Hades, and lay in the sepulchre, because, although His soul was separated from His body, yet His divinity was never at any time separated from His soul or from His body." Such an argument is a characteristic piece of scholastic quibbling. The second difficulty, mentioned above, has caused much trouble to Roman theologians. Some take the view of the early Fathers and of the Greek Church, that Paradise is to be located in Hades, while others, who find that difficult to believe, have invented two Paradises—a "paradisus inferior" and a "paradisus superior," the latter being the equivalent to Heaven. A still further difficulty the Roman theologians have to contend with is this. Christ liberated the souls of the Old Testament saints, but it was not till forty days later, at His Ascension, according to Roman dogma, that He took with Him to Heaven the souls of the

just whom He had liberated. Much ingenious speculation has been indulged in by scholastic writers to solve the riddle, but unfortunately most of their speculations are conceived in a crudely materialistic spirit.

Closely connected with the belief in Limbo of Roman theology is the belief in Purgatory, which is defined in the Roman Catechism as a place where souls suffer for a time after death on account of their sins, and its existence is sought to be proved by referring to three passages of the New Testament (Matt. xvi. 27; Rev. xxi. 27; 1Cor. iii. 15), an exegesis of these verses which modern theology immediately pronounces to be the absurd reading into Scripture of a dogma that is not there. So that, in the teaching of Thomas Aquinas at any rate, what actually happened at the Descent of Christ to Hades was a migration of the souls of the just first from Limbo to Purgatory, and then from Purgatory to Heaven. Roman Catholic theology is silent as to whether Christ visited Purgatory as well. Aquinas says only that there is nothing to prevent Christ in His descent to Hell from liberating souls in Purgatory.

Turning now to the interpretation of the Descent in the Reformed Church, we find ourselves in quite a different atmosphere. Lutheran theology expounds that Christ descended into Hell after His

coming to life again, but before His appearance at the Resurrection. In fact His descent was the first act of His Resurrection life, and the Hell to which He descended was a real Hell, into which Christ entered with flying banners and dislodged Satan from His throne, just as Albrecht Dürer has depicted in his "Trotz Tod und Teufel." But it must be confessed that Luther never seems to have gone much deeper into the subject than this popular and dramatic picturing of Christ Triumphant over the Devil.

John Calvin dismisses the Roman doctrine of Limbo as a childish fable, and by far-fetched allegorising interpreted the "Descent into Hell" by saying that the unspeakable distress, horror, and agony which Jesus suffered in His soul previous to death was continued after death and constituted the "descensus ad infernos." The Larger Catechism of the Westminster Divines practically accepts the Calvinistic interpretation, and it describes Christ's humiliation after His death as consisting (Question 50) "in His being buried, and continuing in the state of the dead and under the power of death till the third day: which hath been otherwise expressed in these words, 'He descended into Hell.'" The Westminster Divines expressly repudiate all belief in Limbo or Purgatory or in any probationary state after death, declaring (*Con-*

fession of Faith, xxxii. 1), "Besides these two places for souls separated from their bodies (Heaven and Hell), the Scripture acknowledgeth none." Thus, Calvinistic theology would interpret the words, "He descended into Hell," as being merely an amplification and elucidation of the preceding words, "He was dead, and buried."

From the point of view of Christian evidences the whole case for the Descensus may be said to depend on the exegesis of 1 Peter iii. 19, "By which Spirit, He went and preached to the spirits which are in prison." Very different interpretations of these words are given by modern theologians.

1. These words are taken by some exegetes to refer to the pre-existent Christ, and, as Spitta suggests, the "spirits in prison" may from the context mean the world before the time of Noah. In that case this text gives *no* support to a descent of Christ into Hades between His Crucifixion and Resurrection.

2. Baur and others think that Christ's preaching to the "spirits in prison" was after the Resurrection. This is a meaningless exegesis, which a reading of the context shows to be untenable.

3. The words may refer to the preaching of Christ to the spirits between His death and Resurrection, when, of course, they would support the statement, "descendit ad infernos." But even

if we accept this third interpretation of the passage in 1 Peter, we have still to face the fact of the other statements in the New Testament difficult to reconcile with it. It is difficult, for example, as the Roman Catholic theologians have found, to correlate the idea of Christ descending to the abode of departed shades between His burial and resurrection with His statement to the dying thief already referred to (Luke xxiii. 43), "To-day wilt thou be with Me in Paradise." So also St. John (xiv. 12) says, "I go unto My Father," apparently implying that death was to release Him from earthly bonds and restore Him to full communion with the Father. To sum up, the evidence of Scripture is so baffling and the language used is often so figurative, that we cannot make any dogmatic or even definite statement as to the state of the soul of Christ between the burial and the resurrection.

The crux of the difficulty is that the modern mind has given up the belief in Hades as a kind of Hebrew Sheol, the dim underworld wherein do dwell the shades of the departed. Our idea of death and the life after death are so different from what the conception of the Early Church was, that their thought when they speak of a descent to Hades by Christ is as remote from us as Homer's description in the *Odyssey* of the sojourn of

Ulysses among the shades. To modern thought the life after death is essentially the survival of human personality, and the belief in immortality is based, not on any rigid separation of souls into Limbo or Purgatory, Heaven or Hell, but rather on a wide interpretation of Christ's words (John xiv. 2), "In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." Just because of these difficulties and because of the doubtfulness of Scriptural authority behind it, many modern theologians would like to get rid of this article in the Creed altogether. Professor von Harnack, for example, points out the lateness of the article in being inserted in the Creed, and maintains that as it came from the comparatively insignificant Church of Aquileia, it is therefore not so authoritative as the rest of the Creed. He says: "The clause is too weak to maintain its ground beside the others, as equally independent and authoritative." So also Dr. Friedrich Loofs, in the article on "The Descensus" in Hastings' *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, says:

> "The Jewish-Christian beliefs regarding Hades and the sojourn of the soul therein, as also those regarding Heaven, which underlie the idea of the Descensus, belong to a cosmology which even the most determined 'lau-

> dator temporis acti ' cannot now accept. The conception, moreover, is really inseparable from these underlying beliefs, and, when the latter crumble away, nothing of the former remains. . . . It were fitting, therefore, that the Churches distinguished as Evangelical should omit the article ' descendit ad inferos ' from their programmes of instruction in Christian doctrine and worship."

And more recently Mr. Boyd Scott, on similar grounds, would delete the words, " He descended into Hell," from the Creed, and substitute instead the words, " He triumphed in His death." To quote Mr. Boyd Scott's words:

> " Now it is obvious that if we change our view of the condition of the departed, the whole picture of the Descent of Jesus changes with it. And certainly we have departed very thoroughly from the view which sets the departed in Sheol or Hades." [1]

Now it seems to me that while it is true that our conception of the condition of the departed has developed greatly, and we have abandoned the belief in a misty underworld of shades that the primitive Church believed in, yet to abandon the clause, " He descended into Hell," or to substitute for it, " He triumphed in His death "—or

[1] *Nevertheless We Believe*, pp. 54–55.

even to interpret it as the Divines at Westminster interpreted it, "He continued in the state of the dead, and under the power of death till the third day"—would be to abandon a most important and fundamental truth of the Christian faith. For without perplexing ourselves with the insoluble problems of what Jesus did, where He went, and how He fared between His passage from the Cross to the Resurrection, we have the assurance from this article of the Creed, that Christ while He was in the state of death had fellowship with the souls of those who died. This article assures us that there was no necessary alienation from Him of those who had died without having known Him in the flesh or in His body, the Church. The Descensus solves for us the problem of the seeming injustice to those who died before Christ's coming, being condemned not to see salvation, or the seeming injustice to the thousands in our own day who have never heard the Gospel of Christ or of salvation through Him, because it assures us that even death cannot separate us from the love of Christ, and the souls of those who have died ignorant of His saving Gospel may still be brought into His presence, and instructed by Christ Himself. This article opens up to the mind the glorious possibility of the offer of salvation even *after* death, as 1 Peter iii. 19 seems to teach, a doctrine

which both the universalism of Christ's teaching and our inherent sense of justice seem to demand.

There is another aspect of the "Descent into Hell" that is too often overlooked. The clause gives us the certainty that was expressed by the Psalmist in the words (Ps. xxiii. 4), "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." For whatever be our view of the condition of the departed after death, we are assured that in no state or condition need they be separated from Christ. At no point in their pilgrimage beyond the tomb need they lack His comfort, His guidance, and His help. In fact, this clause is an attempt to put into the hard prose of dogma what the Psalmist expressed far more beautifully and truly in the language of poetry (Ps. cxxxix. 8–10), "If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there: if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand hold me."

Because it enshrines this great truth as an essential among the statements of the Apostles' Creed, it would not be removed without irreparable loss to the statement of the fundamentals of the Christian faith.

CHAPTER VIII

THE RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION

" The third day He rose from the dead : He ascended into Heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty."

AS we would expect from the fact of its lying at the very core of the Christian Faith, belief in the Resurrection of Christ forms an essential part of every one of the historic Creeds of Christendom, both in East and West, and for the most part that belief is expressed in the very words of the Apostles' Creed, " the third day He rose from the dead," *τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ ἀναστάντα ἀπὸ τῶν νεκρῶν*. But in the earliest forms of the Creed of the Western Church, Christ is described as being raised by the agency of the Father, *ἐγερθεὶς*, not *ἀναστὰς*. For example, in four of the credal statements in the Acts of the Apostles, Christ is described as " being raised by the Father "—Acts iii. 16, *ὃν ὁ θεὸς ἤγειρεν ἐκ νεκρῶν* ; v. 30, *ὁ θεὸς τῶν πατέρων ἡμῶν ἤγειρεν Ἰησοῦν* ; x. 40, *τοῦτον ὁ θεὸς ἤγειρε τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ* ; but in the same sermon as the last passage, Acts x. 41 reads, *μετὰ τὸ ἀναστῆναι αὐτὸν*

ἐκ νεκρῶν ; Acts xiii. 30, ὁ δὲ θεὸς ἤγειρεν αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν. It is the constant usage of St. Paul to describe Christ as raised from the dead by the Father (1 Cor. xv. 5): ἐγήγερται τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ τρίτῃ. So eight times in the Epistle to the Romans he speaks of "raised by the Father," and frequently also in Second Corinthians and Galatians. The Resurrection is described in the same way in all the Gospels as being achieved through the agency of the Father. It is a curious fact that the only cases in the New Testament where the Creed word ἀναστὰς is used of the Resurrection are the cases where our Lord prophesies His rising on the third day, as in such instances in all four Gospels and Acts. Many of the credal statements in the Fathers of the first four centuries prefer the usual New Testament form of statement, "raised (ἐγερθεὶς) from the dead the third day," *e.g.* Ignatius (*Ep. to Trallians*), "who also was truly raised from the dead, His Father having raised Him." Tertullian, twice out of three times, has "the third day raised again from the dead." The change from ἐγερθεὶς to ἀναστὰς was due probably to the rise of heresies, (1) Gnosticism and (2) Arianism, both of which tended to deny the power of Christ, and to make Him subordinate to the Father. Therefore the Church finally adopted the formula, "rose from

the dead," to counter those who denied Christ's power and divinity.

What, then, are the evidences for the Resurrection of Jesus? Any one who reads with unbiased mind his New Testament must come to the conclusion that something of a most portentous nature, that shook the world to its foundations and altered the whole course of human history, profoundly changing the whole outlook of mankind, took place that first Easter morning, the third day after the death of Jesus Christ on the Cross of Calvary. And the baffling difficulties, the discrepancies, the inconsistencies of the different accounts of the happenings on the Resurrection morn and on the following days, as given in the Gospels, do not get rid of the *fact* that something of tremendous importance to all men, and something that seemed to the Apostles who were eye-witnesses of the events to be the only thing that mattered in the history of the world, did take place that Easter morning. The exact explanation of it all may prove a mystery well-nigh insoluble, but that a tremendous *something* happened, there can be no manner of doubt. As Professor Ernest Scott has written:

> "In the accounts of the Resurrection that have come down to us, there may be many discrepancies and even a palpable overgrowth

of legend; but no criticism can assail the essential fact that something happened shortly after our Lord's death, which sufficed to convince His disciples that He had arisen and was still alive."[1]

In dealing with this question of our Lord's Resurrection, we are accustomed, as so often happens in theology, to approach the problem from the wrong side, and get involved in difficulties about the discrepant accounts of what exactly happened, so that we do not see the wood for the trees. We are wandered amongst the mazes of detail in exegesis and criticism, and can find no way out. To understand what the Resurrection of Christ meant to His contemporaries, let us go not to the Gospels, the earliest of which was written not before 60 A.D., but to St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians, written nearly a decade earlier, in 54–55 A.D. In 1 Corinthians xv. St. Paul gives a very clear and logical account both of the Resurrection of Christ and of what he conceives to be the resurrection of the dead, for mankind in general. And the central truth of all his preaching, as he says in that chapter, is the great dominating fact of the Resurrection of Christ. "And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain; yea, and we are found false

[1] *The Apologetic of the New Testament*, p. 47.

witnesses of God: because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ" (1 Cor. xv. 14, 15). In other words, Paul says, if this central theme of his preaching be not true, then does he stand convicted as a liar and blasphemer. But for twenty years he had been preaching the Risen Christ in Palestine, in Asia Minor, and in Greece, and never had he found any reason to doubt the truth of his message. For, he tells us, the truth of that message is testified to by abundant witnesses (1 Cor. xv. 4–8), "He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. He was seen of Cephas and of the Twelve. After that, He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, He was seen of James, then of all the Apostles. And last of all, He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time."

Now it is inconceivable that Paul could write these things of the Resurrection, within twenty-five years of that event, and not be challenged and disproved, if he were saying that which was not true. The enemies of Christ were very numerous, especially the Jews in Corinth, as elsewhere. Would they not have used any opportunity that presented itself of convicting Paul of preaching untruths? And yet in spite of all the storm of opposition raised against him, we do not find that

any of his enemies dared to declare that when he said that Christ rose from the dead, he was speaking what was not true. "Throughout the Apostolic writings," says Dr. W. N. Clarke, "the Resurrection forms a part of the very substance of Christian doctrine. The vitality of the Christian Church as a teacher of truth and goodness is a powerful confirmation: for the Church was born of faith in the Resurrection, and it is most improbable that the gospel of genuineness and reality was founded in a fiction or a fancy" (*An Outline of Christian Theology*, p. 274).

Coming now to consider the manner and significance of the Resurrection as it appeared to St. Paul, the first point we notice is, that Christ's rising from the dead was not, to the Apostle, a mere revivifying of His dead body. It was not merely His release from the grave, but it signified His entrance to the eternal world and attainment to the possession of divine and spiritual power. Christ's resurrection body is a "spiritual body," as Paul calls it, and that spiritual body was different from the body that was buried, though it might resemble it to all appearance. The essential thing is that the Risen Christ is released from all that is earthly and admitted to a position of spiritual freedom, and so can become the centre and source of holy life for men (cf. 1 Cor. xv. 45–49;

Eph. i. 18–ii. 6; Phil. iii. 8–11). And for this reason Paul finds no difficulty in classifying the appearance of the Risen Christ to him on the road to Damascus as "to one born out of due time," as being the same as the post-Resurrection appearances of the Risen Christ to the other Apostles, as recorded in the Gospels. Now Paul does not go into any detail in his description of the spiritual body of Christ's Resurrection. The one thing he insists on is that it is *not* material (1 Cor. xv. 50): "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption"; but further than this Paul does not go in describing the spiritual body of the Resurrection. This much, at any rate, we are justified in concluding, that to St. Paul the spiritual body of Jesus which appeared to him and to the other Apostles, after the Resurrection morning, was not merely a hallucination or a subjective vision, but was something much more definite, so as to be visible to the five hundred brethren at once.

Turning now to the Gospel evidence, we begin with St. Mark, the earliest of the Gospels. Here unfortunately the evidence is scanty, as the original ending has been lost, and the Gospel breaks off suddenly at chapter xvi. verse 8, in the middle of a sentence with the appearance of Christ

to Mary of Magdala, Mary the mother of James and Salome, on the Easter morning. Modern critics are agreed that chapter xvi. verses 9–20 of Mark's Gospel is a compilation from the other Gospels, made by some early scribe to fill up the blank caused by the loss of the last leaf of the Gospel.

But we note that in the genuine portion of Mark's Gospel that evangelist records the fact of the Resurrection, and tells of the stone rolled away from the mouth of the tomb, and of the youth sitting at the right side of the empty tomb, and of the terror of the women who visited the sepulchre. St. Matthew's account has some notable differences. The main points in his description are that he records an earthquake as having taken place on the Resurrection morning, that the stone was rolled away from the tomb, and the fear of the sentries who had been sent to guard against any attempt to steal the body. The Risen Jesus appears at the tomb to the women. St. Matthew also records the attempt by the chief priests and Pharisees to bribe the soldiers, and the beginning of the tradition among the Jews of the false story circulated by the soldiers, that the body of Jesus was stolen away by His disciples. St. Matthew records only one appearance of Jesus after the Resurrection day—to the eleven disciples who had gone to Galilee: "and when they saw Him, they

worshipped Him: but some doubted" (Matt. xxviii. 17). In St. Matthew's account we seem to be able to trace the beginnings of accretions to the story of the Resurrection. His mention of the tomb being guarded by soldiers is hardly consistent with St. Mark's account, and the story of the bribing of the soldiers has the appearance of being an addition to the original narrative.

St. Luke's version of the Resurrection has many perplexing discrepancies, and has the appearance of being a later account, embodied from oral tradition probably. This evangelist mentions two men as being at the tomb, not one youth, as in Mark. Unlike Matthew, Luke knows nothing of the earthquake, nor of the guard of soldiers, nor of the attempt to bribe the sentries. Several appearances of Christ after the Resurrection are recorded by St. Luke that are not found in the other evangelists. He recounts the appearance to the women in the garden, as in Matthew and Mark, only in St. Luke's narrative the women do not see Jesus. Then St. Luke alone among the evangelists has the story of Christ appearing to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. An appearance of Christ to the Eleven Apostles is described as taking place at Jerusalem, and not in Galilee, as in Matthew. But though in St. Luke's account Christ makes sudden appearances

and disappearances in each of these cases, yet to St. Luke Christ after the Resurrection has a material, tangible body. Our Lord is recorded as saying, Luke xxiv. 39, "A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have." And He is further represented as eating a piece of broiled fish and of an honeycomb. St. Luke's account of the post-Resurrection Christ is therefore decidedly more materialistic than the earlier conceptions of St. Paul and St. Mark. The same materialistic view of the post-Resurrection Christ is found in Luke's other work, the Acts of the Apostles, where Acts i. 4 reads *συναλιζόμενος*, "having eaten with them." Still more serious discrepancies are to be found in St. John's account of the Resurrection in the Fourth Gospel. In the narrative of this evangelist, Mary sees Christ in the garden, but takes Him to be the gardener. Apparently St. John did not think of Jesus appearing in a human flesh-and-blood body. At least that seems to be the best meaning to give to His cryptic saying to Mary, "Touch Me not: for I am not yet ascended to My Father" (John xx. 17). Then in the Fourth Gospel Jesus is described as appearing through closed doors to the Eleven in Jerusalem. John also records an appearance of Jesus in material bodily form to the Eleven, along with Thomas, when that Apostle was bidden to receive ocular

demonstration that Christ's Body was real. It is agreed by most critics that chapter xxi. of St. John's Gospel is of later date than the rest, and therefore its evidence is not so reliable or trustworthy. In that chapter an appearance of Jesus is recorded to Peter and the sons of Zebedee while they are fishing, and Jesus eats fish with them.

Now it is, of course, impossible for us to reconcile all the discrepancies in these varying accounts, and the two later Gospels, Luke and John, show signs of more materialistic ideas of the Resurrection having become current when they were written than are to be found in the two earlier Gospels.

Let us try to sum up what is common to St. Paul and the four Evangelists and the Book of Acts as to the Resurrection of our Lord.

1. There was a Resurrection of Christ on the third day after the entombment. This fact is amply confirmed by the adoption of Sunday as the day of Christian worship, right from the foundation of the Church on the Day of Pentecost.
2. The tomb was empty—so all four Evangelists testify.
3. Christ returned to life and was seen again and again by the disciples. But His post-Resurrection life was very different from His Incarnate life up to the Crucifixion.

Only in the later Gospels is He represented as having "a body of flesh and blood."

4. The post-Resurrection body of our Lord is represented by all the Evangelists as being completely different in nature, though precisely similar in appearance to the Body which was crucified on Calvary. He did not dwell with His friends as before, but suddenly and miraculously appeared to them from time to time and talked with them. In the intervals He was unseen by any one, and He is not described as sojourning anywhere on earth. His life after the Resurrection was plainly not of the ordinary bodily order, though the later Evangelists represent Him as capable of eating and performing bodily functions.

Now it seems to me that we can throw no further light on the nature of Christ's post-Resurrection body than is thrown by St. Paul, and that we are justified by Scripture evidences in coming to the following conclusions:

1. The post-Resurrection body of Christ was "a spiritual body," as St. Paul calls it, possessing all the outward characteristics of the body that was taken down from the Cross, but endowed with qualities which make it more than a merely physical body.

2. Such a body of the post-Resurrection Christ was seen by Paul after the Ascension, exactly as He was seen of the Apostles before the Ascension.

And with the evidence before us, we cannot perhaps go further than that.

But some modern thinkers have tried to penetrate the mystery, and a theory originally propounded by Keim has been enthusiastically taken up by Dr. Wade and Mr. Boyd Scott among others. I give the explanation of Dr. Wade :

> " Our Lord, having passed into the spiritual sphere, acted upon the senses of His disciples from within, the brain-cells being stimulated in such a way as to create the same impressions as would have been caused if a Figure had been presented to the sensory organs from without. Such impressions, it may be assumed, would reproduce images previously stored in the mind ; and these would probably vary with individuals. In the case of St. Paul, by whom Jesus is described as being seen in the midst of radiant light, the idea of Jesus in glory must often have been present to his imagination, since among the themes upon which the Christians whom he persecuted dwelt was the exaltation of their Master to heaven, where He was invested with

divine splendour. And if the details of the Appearances (dress, speech, wounds, etc.) were mediated through the memory, the fact that in Acts xxvi. 14 Jesus is represented as speaking in Aramaic is accounted for" (*New Testament History*, p. 481).

Dr. Wade meets the obvious criticisms to his theory by saying (1) that the gradual emergence in the later Gospels of the idea that the Resurrection body was flesh and blood was due to the materialistic mind of the Jews and to the desire of the Church to combat Docetic heresies. (2) Dr. Wade contends that the fixing of the third day for the Resurrection, as all the New Testament witnesses unanimously testify, was due to an attempt to fulfil the Old Testament prophecy, Hosea vi. 2.

Mr. Boyd Scott develops the far-fetched idea that the empty tomb is to be explained by the spiritual body somehow absorbing the material body. But the whole theory is to me unsatisfactory, and I share the opinion of the late Professor Sanday as to Keim's hypothesis, when he says: "But we may doubt whether the theory, even as Keim presents it, is adequate or really called for. It belongs to the process of so trimming down the elements that we call supernatural, in the Gospel narratives, as to bring them within

the limits of everyday experience."[1] And I share Professor W. P. Paterson's grave doubts as to whether the empty tomb can be so easily disposed of as Wade and Keim would make out.

Summing up the whole position, the evidence points to the fact (1) that there was a Resurrection of Jesus from the grave on the third day. (2) According to St. Paul and St. Mark, and perhaps St. Matthew, the Resurrection body was not an ordinary body of flesh and blood, though it was recognisable to all outward appearance as that of Jesus. (3) The Resurrection appearances of Jesus were not merely subjective visions, but later thought tended to make these appearances more material than in the earliest records. The essential thing is that Jesus was alive, the same person as before, having the same nature as before, and He showed Himself in recognisable form to those who knew Him. Death had not had dominion over Him. He lived and is alive to-day endued with a new glory and with new spiritual power. For the rest, we may only say that, as we have seen reason for believing in the pre-existent and eternal Christ, it should not only not be difficult but absolutely necessary for us to believe in His Resurrection and continued life. He who had been in the Godhead from all eternity could not remain

[1] *Outlines of the Life of Christ*, p. 183.

under the dominion of death, or cease to be. The exact manner of His Incarnation in the womb of Mary is a mystery that we cannot with our finite knowledge determine—so also the exact manner of His laying aside His Incarnate Form is a mystery too deep for us. We may well be content to rest in a reverent agnosticism as to the exact manner in which it was accomplished, while we are emphatic as to the fact of its real accomplishment.

We pass now to consider the next clause in the Creed : " He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty." Here again we note that these words occur in practically all the versions of the Western Creed. The original form of the Creed of Nicæa had not the words of the session of Christ at the right hand of the Father, but these words were added to the symbol of the Eastern Church in the Creed of Jerusalem, 348 A.D., and are found in the Creed of Constantinople, 381 A.D., and in all subsequent creeds of East and West. In the earliest credal statements in the sermons in Acts, the words do not occur in precisely the later form. We have in Acts such statements as " received into heaven," and " exalted to the right hand of God," but the Book of Acts i. 9–12 has a very explicit account of the Ascension. On view of such facts it is surely

inaccurate and misleading for Professor Harnack to say that "the special prominence given to the Ascension in the Apostles' Creed is another deviation from the oldest teaching, for in the primitive tradition the Ascension had no separate place." Harnack bases these statements largely on the alleged silence of the Synoptists and of St. Paul regarding the Ascension. Let us examine the evidence of the Synoptists. We have already seen that the original St. Mark's Gospel stops short at the narrative of events on the Resurrection morning in the middle of a sentence, and the true ending of St. Mark's Gospel is lost to us, probably for ever. St. Matthew's Gospel stops before the Ascension with the record of the appearance of Christ in Galilee. In St. Luke's Gospel, after removing words that are an interpolation, we have the statement, *διέστη ἀπ' αὐτῶν καὶ αὐτοι ὑπέστρεψαν εἰς Ἱερουσαλὴμ μετὰ χαρᾶς μεγάλης* (Luke xxiv. 50, 51), and the meaning of these words is cleared up by the account Luke gives of the Ascension in the first chapter of Acts. It is therefore inaccurate to say that there is no mention of the Ascension in the Synoptic tradition. Nor is it quite accurate to say that St. Paul has no knowledge of the Ascension; for although the actual ascent to heaven is not mentioned by the Apostle, yet the session of Christ at the right

hand of God is a favourite thought of his. Cf. Romans viii. 34, "It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God." So also the Ascension is implicit in Ephesians iv. 8–10, "Now He that ascended up on high, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth. He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fulfil all things." And the Epistles to the Thessalonians speak of the expected καταβάσις of the Lord. That surely implies that an ἀναβάσις had taken place. 1 Timothy iii. 16 quotes an early Christian hymn which refers to Christ as "received up in glory." Therefore we may conclude that an Ascension of some sort was known to Paul.

Again, Professor Harnack argues that "in some of the oldest accounts the resurrection and the sitting at the right hand of God are taken as parts of the same act, without mention of any ascension." But here the argument rests on very flimsy foundations, and over against the surmise of Harnack we have the statement of Luke in Acts that forty days elapsed between the Resurrection and the Ascension, and the fact that since the fourth century at any rate the Church Catholic has observed the fortieth day after the Resurrection or Easter as Ascension Day.

But how are we to interpret the meaning of the

Ascension ? To the modern mind there are supreme difficulties in St. Luke's story in Acts. For that story seems to assume that it was a physical body that went up into the clouds before the Apostles' eyes, and it pictures a cosmogony impossible to the modern mind—the earth as a level plain with heaven located somewhere beyond the bright blue sky. Somehow the picture given by Paul of Christ passing into a state of glory and His reign in the spiritual world at God's right hand is far more acceptable to us than Luke's attempt to picture spiritual truths in physical terms. St. Paul at any rate, was not interested in the manner of the Ascension. It is the great fact of the glorified Christ, sitting at the right hand of the Father, that he preaches as the essential thing. And it were well for us to abandon foolish speculations about the possibility of the levitation of a physical body of flesh and blood into the clouds, and look upon the Ascension rather as an event of spiritual significance marking the withdrawal from life visible and tangible on earth to life invisible and intangible in the spiritual world.

We have already seen reason to believe that the Resurrection body of Christ was, in all probability, not an ordinary human body of flesh and blood. It suddenly appeared and disappeared : it entered a room where there were no ordinary means

of admission; and if we are to try to fit together the various post-Resurrection appearances of Christ, we have to assume that distance was traversed without the time needed for the movements of an ordinary human body. At the same time, as we have seen, the body was not merely phantasmal, not merely the subjective image of a body, no mere hallucination, but having some at least of the qualities of an ordinary human body. May it not be that the phenomenon we know as the Ascension was simply the further transformation of that "spiritual body" into some still higher form, which St. Paul speaks of as "the body of His glory"? The literal descriptiveness of the narrative of the Ascension in Acts need not be minutely insisted on. The "cloud that received Him out of sight" may well be a symbol—a metaphor for indicating that the "body of His glory" would be thereafter veiled from human understanding as from human vision—a symbolism frequently found in the apocalyptic literature of the Jews.

And if it be objected that this does not explain the disappearance of Christ's material body, I would argue that we know too little of the ultimate nature of matter to be able to dogmatise on this subject. Recent scientific researches into the ultimate nature of matter have taught us to

revise our ideas as to the deadness of the material world. The creation of matter is no longer looked upon by scientists or theologians as something of the nature of a fall. We have got away completely from Gnostic and Manichean errors as to the inherent evil of matter. And "we have no longer to consider the difficulties of positing a certain time for the commencement of creative activity" —to quote Dr. Orchard. "The whole material world is kept in existence, not by things remaining dead, but by everything being very much alive; while at the same time this actual world may be only one of the forms that a material universe can take. Creation is a perpetual energy, and creation may therefore be as eternal as God. Nothing can be destroyed, but only the creative activity of God directed in another way" (W. E. Orchard, *Sermon on the Meaning of the Ascension*).

But, after all, it is the spiritual meaning of Christ's Ascension and sitting at God's right hand that matters most. It is the poetical meaning of it rather than the physical explanation that is of value to religion. The great truth that it enshrines is that Christ is alive to-day, and actively interested in all humanity, though He is veiled from human sight. And we who have missed witnessing the lowly glory of His Incarnation, as He lived on earth, have at least this compensation

that He is known to us spiritually in His exaltation "in the body of His glory." We perhaps cannot even imagine all that is meant by the words "the body of His glory." John tries to describe it in the Apocalypse: "with a face like the sun, and eyes like a flame of fire, and a voice like many waters." All such descriptions must fail adequately to symbolise the sublime and mystic truth of the greatness of the living, unseen Christ. As we come into His nearer presence when we reverently break the bread and drink the wine of Holy Communion, we seem to come to a truer understanding of the ascended Christ who sitteth at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty, than by all our searchings into the meaning of what exactly happened on the Mount of the Ascension forty days after the first Easter. At these exalted moments there is revealed to us the fact that the whole world is taken up into Christ, and therefore into God, and we come to realise that the ascended and glorified Christ does in a real sense have His Body on earth in His Church—that He suffers with it—is broken with it—that He knows endless pain because of what the members of His Body on earth suffer—and yet, through His Divine immanence, that Body will yet be knit together and made to pulse with health and power. Thus Christ sitting at the right hand of God, the Father

Almighty, is no absentee God, infinitely removed from this suffering world. He is "closer to us than breathing, and nearer than hands or feet," as Mrs. Browning puts it. And the glory of the exalted Christ who is with the Father, and yet condescends to come whenever bidden into a humble human heart, as Friend and not as Lord, is the supremest glory of our Christian faith. It is the same Christ ascended and exalted in glory who comes as suppliant to humanity pleading, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with Me." And this ascended and glorified Christ still bears the wounds of the nails and of the spear, because men by their disobedience and refusal to come to Him "do crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh and put Him to an open shame."

CHAPTER IX

CHRIST AS JUDGE

"From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead."

IN the Apostles' Creed the belief in Christ's Second Coming and in a Final Judgment is expressed in the words, "From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead." In the Roman symbol, *circa* 400 A.D., as in the Creeds of Marcellus and Rufinus, the belief occurs in practically the same form. In the still earlier credal passages in the writings of Tertullian and Irenæus, as in all the great Creeds of the Eastern Church from Nicæa onwards, the same statement of belief occurs, sometimes with a slight variation in the wording, but always the idea seems to be precisely the same. In only one of the credal sermons in the Acts of the Apostles, strange to say, is this section of the Creed found, namely, in St. Peter's speech to Cornelius (Acts x. 42), "that it is He which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead." Our endeavour in this chapter will be (1) to discover what the Early Church

believed as to our Lord's Second Coming, and then to try to find out how the idea is to be interpreted in the light of modern knowledge; and (2) to discover similarly what were the conceptions of primitive Christianity as to a Final Judgment, and what meaning the conception can have for us to-day.

To the New Testament scholar who has studied closely the earliest documents depicting the life of the Apostolic Church, the earlier letters of St. Paul, and the Book of Acts, nothing is clearer than that the Early Church lived in daily and hourly expectation of a sudden and speedy Second Coming of Christ in glory. First Thessalonians, the earliest Christian writing we possess, gives a clear picture of the expectancy of a Christian community, so engrossed in looking for the coming Lord, that they neglected their daily vocations, and so merited the rebuke of the Apostle. In 1 Thessalonians iv. we have preserved for us the popular expectations of that time, *circa* 49–50 A.D. The victorious Christ was to appear in overwhelming splendour, majesty, and glory. He would return on shining clouds. A trumpet would sound, blown by an archangel throughout all earth and heaven. "Then the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to

meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thess. iv. 16, 17). And the time that must elapse before this Second Coming of Christ, St. Paul thinks, is short. It will occur in the lifetime of those then living (1 Cor. vii. 25–31, xv. 51, 52). And that this was not merely a Pauline conception, but was a belief really universal in the Church in the first few decades after Pentecost, is evident from such passages as Acts iii. 19–21. St. Peter also, in his preaching in Acts, describes the Second Coming of Christ as imminent. So in the First Epistle of Peter, dating probably about 64 A.D., the speedy Second Coming is described as being the consummation of all things, when the Judgment of this wicked world would take place and the saints of God would enter into glory. Likewise the unknown author of the Epistle to the Hebrews is filled with the same conviction (Heb. x. 37), "For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." So also St. James, in his Epistle tells us (v. 8, 9), "The coming of the Lord draweth nigh"; and again he says, "Look: the Judge is standing at the very door." Thus we have abundant evidence that the Church in the earliest period believed in a sudden and catastrophic coming of Christ in glory in the clouds. But as weeks and months and years passed, and the eager expectations of the Apostolic Church were not

realised, and hopes as to the speediness of the Coming of Christ began to wane, gradually Christ's appearing in glory began to be spoken of as an event that would take place in the distant future. This point of view is emphasised in the Imprisonment Epistles of St. Paul, the Apostle's later writings, *e.g.* Philippians iii. 20, 21, where he says, "For our conversation is in heaven: from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ"; but, as the context shows, the coming of Christ is no longer thought of as being near at hand. In the Book of Revelation the Second Coming of Christ is described as being postponed for a thousand years. Satan must reign for a thousand years, and thereafter Christ will come in His glory. The final sublimation and spiritualisation of the conception of Christ's Second Coming is found in the Fourth Gospel. There all idea of a physical coming in the clouds with great glory is definitely abandoned. Christ's coming in power is predicted in St. John's Gospel, but in quite another fashion. His coming is to be as a spiritual presence with His people and the world, *e.g.* John xiv. 18: "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come unto you," is recorded as a saying of our Lord. So also John xiv. 23: "If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our

abode with him." And even when our Lord says (John xvi. 16), "A little while and ye shall not see Me, and again a little while and ye shall see Me: because I go to My Father," the whole conception, as the context shows, is of Christ's return to the world in invisible form, as the ever-living Christ, the Head of His Body, the Church. So also in the Fourth Gospel the judging of mankind is described as being in the present as well as in the future, and though in John vi. 40 this Gospel speaks of Christ raising up those who believe on Him, yet nowhere in this Gospel is Christ's coming connected with the Last Day or with the Day of universal Resurrection. But always the coming of Christ is regarded as an event invisible and spiritual, and it will take place as soon as the Holy Spirit is given to the Church.

At this stage of our inquiry, it is right for us to inquire why the Apostolic Church universally looked for the coming of Christ in great glory, as an ocular event near in time, when the Lord would appear in the clouds as the King and Judge of men—an expectation that gradually waned and disappeared, as the passage of the years, when Christ's appearing was not visibly achieved, made the expectation illusory. There can be but little doubt that this widespread and illusory belief as to Christ's coming in glory was due to a mis-

understanding by the primitive Church of the teaching of the Master. When we examine the statements of our Lord as to His Second Coming as recorded in the Synoptic Gospels we find that the teaching of Jesus comes under two heads: (1) He taught that the end of the world was nigh; (2) He taught that He, in spite of His humiliation and death upon the Cross, would speedily return in power and glory to judge the living and the dead. Not only in the primitive Church but in modern theology, the exact meaning of this apocalyptic teaching of our Lord is disputed, and various different interpretations of it are given; and certainly the apocalyptic elements in Christ's teaching are, of all, the most baffling and difficult to understand.

Amongst modern interpreters of the meaning of our Lord's apocalyptic teaching about the end of the world, His Second Advent, and the Judgment, there is the school of thinkers who agree with Albert Schweitzer, who enjoyed a great vogue a dozen years ago. A new era in the study of apocalyptic was ushered in by the publication of Schweitzer's *Von Reimarus zu Wrede*, for in that book Schweitzer boldly asserted that every apocalyptic reference in the Gospels was intended by our Lord to be taken as literally and exactly true, that the whole teaching of Jesus was an apoca-

lyptic teaching, entirely based on the erroneous assumption that the end of the world was at hand, and even His moral teaching, the ethic of the Sermon on the Mount, is to be taken not as a universal ethic for all time, but is rather to be regarded as an "Interim Ethik," a morality called into being by the imminent end of the world. Thus, according to Schweitzer, when Jesus says, "Agree with thine adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him," the meaning is, that in view of the end of the world being at hand and the nearness of the Day of Judgment, men must compose their differences and come to agreement. And so with all the moral teaching of our Lord, Schweitzer declares that it was all called forth by our Lord's conviction that the end of the world was at hand. Schweitzer then further declares that Jesus was Himself disappointed and disillusioned by the failure of His prophecies and expectations to materialise. And when He retired into Galilee, as recorded in Mark ix. 29, 30, and would not that any man should know it, He went out into the wilderness a broken man, because He had vainly imagined that the Vision of the Transfiguration immediately before was to be the beginning of the end; and when the end did not come, He began to see, according to Schweitzer, that something had gone wrong, and to realise

that an infuriated multitude would demand His blood. Therefore, He begins forthwith to foretell His death, and He continues to speak in all the following chapters in Mark's Gospel, after the record of His retirement into Galilee, of His coming crucifixion. And according to Schweitzer, Mark's account makes it clear that the multitude demanded Christ's death because He had failed to implement His promises or bring His prophecies to fulfilment. The charge against Jesus made before Caiaphas was, according to Mark xiv. 58, " We heard Him say, ' I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.' " And what sealed the doom of Jesus, according to Mark xiv. 62, was Jesus' answer to the high priest saying He was the Christ, the Son of the Blessed, to which He added the prophecy of His Second Coming : " And ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." Thus from first to last, according to Schweitzer, the whole story of Jesus was a tragedy of apocalyptic, the story of tragic mistakes and illusory hopes. This false and unworthy view of the thought and apocalyptic teaching of Jesus, which a few years ago had a great attraction for some theologians, has been abandoned by most of its former exponents. To accept it, means of course

that we make Christ to be a disillusioned dreamer, whose thinking was sadly astray owing to the prevailing trend of apocalyptic thought of the time, all His teaching vitiated by highly pictured views of the end of the world, and His crucifixion but a just punishment for His cruelly deluding the people.

The fundamental error of Schweitzer's view of Jesus' teaching is that it attributes to Him a totally false literalism in all His apocalyptic teaching. It was precisely the same error that vitiated the outlook of the primitive Church, and made them look for portents in the sky, and a sudden appearance of Christ in glory. It was the same type of error, the same lack of imagination and spiritual insight to understand the deeper and hidden meaning of Christ, that made St. Peter so often completely misunderstand His Master and so often grieved Jesus' heart. And yet the obtuseness of the early disciples to understand Christ's teaching might be excused, when we remember that they lived at a time when apocalyptic language was much in evidence and always interpreted in a material and physical sense. The Jews expected the coming of the Day of the Lord foretold by the ancient prophets, and that Day was to be at once a "Dies Iræ," a day of wrath and judgment, and also a day when the Lord Jahve would be revealed in all His glory. The

coming of that Day of the Lord was to be heralded by all the cosmic portents and cataclysms spoken of by the prophet Joel and the Book of Enoch. And when Jesus tried to spiritualise these conceptions, it was only natural that His contemporaries should fail to understand and cling to their popular beliefs, believing that Jesus in His teaching confirmed their confident expectations of visible theophanies and cosmic disturbances.

Another attempt to explain the difficulties in the apocalyptic teaching of our Lord is that advocated by the late Professor E. Troeltsch. His point of view is that modern Christianity is really an organic evolution of modern thought, changed out of all recognition almost from the simple Christianity of Christ, which according to Troeltsch was subject to the limitations of being born on Jewish soil, and adopting the Jewish cosmogony of the time, which to the modern mind is woefully inadequate. And when Christ prophesied the speedy end of the world, and the coming of Himself speedily on the clouds in glory, He was speaking to men of His own age, in language they could understand and subject to the limitations above mentioned. Therefore, to Troeltsch, His teaching about the Second Coming was not of eternal value, and so the modern Church can afford to neglect it. Only those elements of the primitive Christi-

anity that have survived as elements of a live Christian faith throughout the centuries are worthy of our consideration. The rest, according to Troeltsch, has only an antiquarian interest for us. But this agnosticism will not do. We must understand what Christ meant by His apocalyptic teaching, and not rest content with a Christless Christianity such as Troeltsch advocates — a Christianity which is largely an outgrowth of the modern age, and has but little vital connection with its historic founder. We believe that the teaching of the Church to-day is absolutely and entirely the teaching of Jesus Christ, her Lord, and therefore we must seek to find some adequate explanation of His apocalyptic teaching in the Gospels. As we have already noticed, modern Biblical Criticism regards the apocalyptic teaching in the Synoptic Gospels as being derived from some written source or sources, not so early nor so primitive as the other sources of these Gospels; *e.g.*, Mark xiii. is regarded as "the little Apocalypse," coming from a distinct source and incorporated into his Gospel by St. Mark. But all such attempts to get rid of the apocalyptic element as an integral part of the earliest Gospel—St. Mark—do not succeed. Even in the narrative of Mark there is woven into the warp and woof the testimony of Jesus as to the imminent end of all

things, and as to His coming in glory. Outside of the so-called "little Apocalypse" altogether, we have such sayings as these: Mark ix. 1, "Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the Kingdom of God come with power"; Mark xiv. 62, "And ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." We must, therefore, endeavour to come to a true interpretation of such apocalyptic sayings as these.

When Jesus speaks of the coming "end of the world," the words He uses are τέλος τοῦ αἰῶνος —literally "the end of the age," and there can be but little doubt that what He thought of was that His own death, followed within forty years by the destruction of Jerusalem, would mean the end of a world-age, the end of the epoch of the ancient world's civilisation, and the beginning of a new era, not only for the Hebrews, but also for pagan Greece and Rome, and in fact for the whole ancient world. A closer study of the apocalyptic teaching of Jesus reveals that this "consummation of a world-age" is not considered by Him to be a definite day or point of time, but is sometimes regarded as coincident with the Fall of Jerusalem, at other times it is spoken of as brought about by the Death and Resurrection of Christ, and some-

times the end of the age and the beginning of the new era is associated with the foundation of the Church. Thus the words of the Risen Lord at the end of St. Matthew's Gospel, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," ought to be translated, "And lo! I am with you all the days, even unto the consummation of the age," and ought to be understood as meaning that the Risen Christ promises to be with the Apostles in visible form, till the "end of the age" comes—*i.e.* either till His Ascension or till the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles at Pentecost. Thereafter He would be with them as an invisible presence as the Head of His Body on earth, the Church. Understood in this sense, Christ spoke the literal truth when He said, "I tell you, the present generation will not pass away, till all this happens" (Mark xiii. 30). If we study in the same way the statements of Jesus about His coming again in the clouds with power, we shall find that here also the Apostolic Church hopelessly misunderstood His message. As Mr. Boyd Scott says (*Nevertheless We Believe*, p. 105):

> "We may be quite sure that Jesus did not really anticipate that He would come again in a setting of tumults in the heavens and a blaze above the earth. That was the popular image of Messiah's coming. Jesus believed

> Himself to be Messiah, but in His own soul, as is plain from the Gospel narrative, He rose far above the vulgar fantasy. In the beginning of His career, He debated within Himself whether He should venture to fulfil that image, but He put it behind Him, yea, as a 'temptation of Satan.' We cannot believe, therefore, that at the close of His earthly career, as He stood before Caiaphas, He yielded to the dream He had definitely rejected three years before. Consider this also: that as His career moved from its popular spring-time to its winter of desertion and seeming failure, He perceived and He taught that His Kingdom would come as a gradual growth in the world—like leaven, like a little seed. This bears out the contention that He did not really anticipate His coming to earth again with the immediacy and abruptness of that second advent in shattered skies and rolling clouds which the first believers anticipated."

And when He spoke before Caiaphas, the high priest, of His coming in clouds with power, He was using purposely veiled language. Caiaphas knew full well the apocalyptic expectations of the Judaism of his day, and Christ tries to infuse a new and spiritual meaning into these Messianic hopes,

just as He tried to get His disciples to understand the spiritual significance of His coming again. But their minds were closed, and they stuck obstinately to the crude popular belief. In Matthew's Gospel, Christ says in the presence of Caiaphas, ἀπ' ἄρτι ὄψεσθε, κ.τ.λ., "From now on you will be continually seeing the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Matt. xxvi. 64). This clearly means that the Second Coming was not to be an event in time, but a continuous process, commencing with the Death of Christ, and going on continually through the ages. Furthermore, in all apocalyptic literature "clouds" are used as a symbol for that which conceals, not of that which reveals. And so when Christ speaks of His coming on the clouds of heaven, He is intending to convey the idea that His next coming to the world will be veiled from human sight, but will be known only to those who are His. Nevertheless it is to be a coming in glory and with power. It seems evident, then, that the Second Coming referred to by Jesus as recorded by the Synoptists is His coming to the world as the invisible Head of His Body, the Church—a coming invisible to outward sight, but seen of those who understand the spiritual significance of His teaching. He came again to the world in visible form in that manifestation of

His power and glory to men in the Resurrection. As really did He come to men, in invisible form at Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit sent by Him was a living personal Presence with every soul among them that believed. He came again in veiled form, but with power and glory, in the foundation and growth of His Church; for the Church of believers is the incarnation in veiled form of His living presence. In it He continues to live on earth, even as the soul inhabits and inspires the body. In His Church Christ still continues to come to the world with power and glory, ever giving fresh manifestation of His presence, and revealing in the life of the Church His supernatural powers.

But now we must consider what Christ meant when He said that at His coming He would be the Judge of the living and the dead. This conception, of course, forms an integral part of the teaching of our Lord. If you think of such parables as the Tares, the Draw-net, and the parable of Judgment in Matthew xxv. 31 ff., in which He pictures the Son of Man sitting on the throne of His glory and all the holy angels with Him, judging the evil and the good, and separating them one from another as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats—if you think of these and other parables you will see that Jesus believed

that there would come an end to all the struggling of humanity, when the Kingdom of God would be fully come, and judgment would be pronounced upon both dead and living. As to when these things will be, He tells us He does not know. It is known to God only. But what He does know and clearly teaches, is that there will be a gradual advance of Christ's Kingdom upon earth, and that throughout the ages the struggle with evil will continue to the very end.

Now the important question arises, Are we to think of the Judgment as a catastrophic event taking place at the end of the world when all things have been fulfilled, or are we to think of it as a process that is continually going on? We have seen reason to abandon the idea of Christ's Second Coming as a sudden theophany in the clouds of the sky, as being contrary to Christ's meaning. Is there reason to think that Christ's view of the Judgment is correctly described as in the Apostles' Creed as a continuous process —*κεῖθεν ἐρχόμενον κρίναι ζῶντας καὶ νεκρούς*, which might be more precisely translated, "from thence He is continually coming to judge the quick and the dead," *ἐρχόμενον* being used instead of *ἐλευσόμενον*? A careful study of New Testament passages dealing with Christ as Judge reveals the fact that it is not only in the Fourth

Gospel that the Judgment is regarded as a process continually going on, but in the Synoptic Gospels and in the letters of St. Paul this idea is also found. When it is said that men are to be judged by Christ, more is meant than that Christ will personally preside in judgment and announce their destiny. It is meant that Christ is the standard by comparison with which character is to be estimated and destiny to be judged. The judgment upon men is to consist in the application of the principles and laws of His Kingdom as the test of their conduct and moral state. The great parable of Judgment, Matthew xxv. 31–46, sets forth in pictorial manner the judgment that Christ must execute, and no man can escape. It seems to me a great mistake to represent Christ as saying that this parable will be fulfilled only at the Day of Judgment at the end of the world. It is being fulfilled here and now. When Jesus says, "When the Son of Man shall come in His glory and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory, and before Him shall be gathered all nations," He is really referring to His coming in power as Head of His Church, and not necessarily to any material theophany in the visible heavens. The meaning surely is, that when Christ is enthroned in men's hearts as King of kings and Lord of lords, this process of judgment

inevitably goes on. Those who have done the works of love out of a free and uncalculating heart will be accepted, and those who have not obeyed Christ's law of love will be *ipso facto* excluded from the joy of true communion with Him.

But in addition to the continuous process of judgment that goes on in the lives of men whenever they own allegiance to Christ, their invisible King, the New Testament teaches that there is another judgment that is passed on men, when they pass from this life to that which is to come, when they cross the threshold of Death. "It is appointed to men once to die, but after that the judgment," says the Epistle to the Hebrews ix. 27, and the teaching of our Lord, as in the parable of Dives and Lazarus, plainly points to a judgment taking place just following after death. The lot or place a man is to have in the life after death is said to depend on the judgment passed by Christ at his death, on the life he lived in this world. And if we believe in the continuous life of the spirit, such a judgment at death is quite what we would expect from a righteous and just God.

But there is in the mind of many Christians a still further idea of Judgment, derived from the highly pictured figures of speech of the Book of Revelation, with its chains and dragons, its horses and vials, the scarlet woman and the millennium.

In that book there is given a terrible picture of a final judgment of the whole world in which the wicked are to be cast into the lake of unquenchable fire, where they are to endure torments for ever and ever. And such apocalyptic pictures of the end of the world seem sometimes to be drawn by Christ Himself in His prophetic utterances. But in seeking to understand these apocalyptic images, it is well for us to remind ourselves of the warning given by Principal Cairns (*Christianity in the Modern World*, p. 203) : " When we realise the boldness (of Christ's use of figurative speech), how freely He took the risk of being misunderstood, how natural it was to Him to use language of this vivid pictorial kind in moments of strong emotion, we can understand the symbolism of the discourses on the Day of Judgment."

In the light of what I have said regarding the true explanation of the Second Coming and the parable of the Judgment, we can come close to the understanding of the pictures of a final Day of Judgment as given in our Lord's teaching and in the Book of Revelation. Robbed of its oriental and apocalyptic imagery, the one great meaning running through it all is, that there will come a time in the history of this world when all will reach its definite and final end in God. There will come a day when Christ finally triumphs over all His

enemies. And the symbolism and imagery in which that final triumph is described are no more to be taken literally than are the symbolism and imagery of Spenser's *Faerie Queene* or of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. What lies behind it all is this: that this world of mankind will reach a crisis, in which God, after age-long and completed patience, will lay His hand on it all, bring His purposes to fruition, and sum up all His creative work in a final End. There may come times in the world's history when Satan seems to rule, when the tide of the Spirit of God seems to ebb far out, leaving in civilisation flat, dreary wastes of desolation, when men seem to sing with the pessimist Swinburne:

> "As waves after ebb flowing seaward,
> When their hollows are full of the night,
> So the birds that came singing to me-ward
> Recede out of sight."

But if we be Christ's and if we have rightly interpreted His visions of His final victory, we know that such a desolation is all a delusion. Christ's Kingdom comes: slowly but surely it comes. It is a tide that rises, with withdrawings sometimes as cavernous and mysterious as the seeming collapse of Europe in recent blood. But whenever God sends such judgments upon man for his iniquity, let us remember Christ's comforting

words (Luke xxi. 28), "And when these things come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads: for your redemption draweth nigh." The judgment of Christ can never be a judgment of wrath, but only of love. So interpreted, we may humbly and reverently subscribe to this clause of the Creed as our belief—"from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead."

CHAPTER X

THE BELIEF IN THE HOLY GHOST

"I believe in the Holy Ghost."

BELIEF in the Holy Spirit as the Third Person in the Trinity forms part of every Creed and credal statement of the Christian Church, both in the East and in the West. In the Creed of Nicæa the words in this section express belief in the Holy Spirit, without amplification or qualification, but in that expansion of the Nicene Creed known as the Creed of Constantinople, the clearer definition of the Holy Spirit reflects the theological controversies of the fourth century. The Constantinople clause reads: "And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spake through the prophets." It was not till the time of St. Augustine that the description of the Spirit as proceeding from the Father was amended to the form, "who proceedeth from the Father and the Son," in the interests of a true

conception of the Trinity, Augustine contending that the original formula, of the Spirit proceeding from the Father only, tended to make the Spirit a very subordinate member of the Trinity, and denied the possibility of reciprocity between the Persons in the Trinity. The Western Church adhered to the view of Augustine, and while their confessional statement remained as in the Apostles' Creed, "I believe in the Holy Ghost," the doctrinal teaching of the Church of the West was that the Holy Spirit proceedeth from the Father and the Son, while the Eastern Church insisted on the excision of the word "filioque," "and from the Son,"—and this difference in credal statement nearly five hundred years later was one of the causes of the Great Schism of Eastern Christendom from the Church of the West. But the history of the long controversy over the "filioque" clause lies outside of our present inquiries. Suffice it to say that the Eastern Church, like the West, acknowledged belief in the Holy Spirit, as a real Person in the Trinity—as truly God as are the Persons of the Father and of the Son, and this belief goes right back to the credal statements of the New Testament.

The Baptismal formula at the close of St. Matthew's Gospel commands Baptism "in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy

Ghost," and such Baptism in the name of the Holy Trinity has been acknowledged by the whole Church in every period of her history. So also belief in the Holy Spirit as God occurs in at least two of the Sermons of St. Peter in the Acts of the Apostles. And St. Paul, in most of his Epistles, but most notably in Romans viii., attributes true deity and real personality to the Holy Spirit (Rom. viii. 26, "The Spirit maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered"). Therefore we have an unbroken tradition, going right back to the foundation of the Church on the Day of Pentecost, of the belief in the Holy Spirit as God—as being an integral part of the Church's faith.

As we have noticed in a previous chapter, the words of the Creed in this clause are invariably *πιστεύω εἰς τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον*, *πνεῦμα* being written with the article. And as we have seen, the insertion of the article, in accordance with the usage throughout the New Testament, implies that the Holy Spirit is here to be regarded as a *Person* and not merely as an impersonal influence. He is to be thought of as having the full attributes of personality, as really a distinct Person as Christ is. But though this has been the invariable belief of the Church throughout the ages, many modern theologians find a difficulty—first, in attributing

any real personality to the Holy Spirit at all, and even of thinking of the Holy Spirit as having any real existence.

By some, the Holy Spirit is explained away as being merely another name for the Spirit of the Eternal Christ; by others, the Holy Spirit is evaporated into being no more than a convenient name for certain psychological phenomena and processes that occur in the spiritual life. In modern times, there is no heresy having more disastrous results than this unbelief in the reality of the Holy Spirit. It is working havoc in the Church, robbing prayer of its meaning, and instead of holding out to believers the hope of entering into true communion and fellowship with the Divine, it would reduce human beings to the place of being mere puppets and playthings in the hands of an infinitely transcendent and inscrutable God.

Let us then briefly state and examine the erroneous views current in our day regarding the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and then proceed to state shortly the necessity of belief in the Holy Spirit as a real and separate Person existent in the Godhead.

1. There are those who state that the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of Christ are one and the same thing, and therefore the two are interchangeable terms. This, of course, implies the

denial of any real separate existence for the Holy Spirit, as well as denial of His Personality, apart and separate from the Personality of Christ. This view has many advocates among the present-day theologians. Mr. Boyd Scott says: "The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of Christ: the Spirit of Christ is the Spirit of God. God is one soul. We must not divide up the one Soul that God is, into separate Divine individuals. We must not say, 'There are some things that God alone does, and some things that Christ alone does, and some things that the Holy Ghost alone does, each operating in His own individual sphere.' It is the one Soul of God that operates in all such things" (*Nevertheless We Believe*, p. 126). So also Professor Moffatt says, in his *Theology of the Gospels*, that the Spirit in the New Testament means always the Spirit of the Unseen Jesus; and Moberley, in his *Atonement and Personality*, maintains the absolute identity of the Person of Christ and the Person of the Spirit. Canon Streeter, in the book on the Spirit edited by him, says: "What is this Holy Spirit? It is no other than the Spirit manifested in the life of Christ." Now all these theologians have fallen into the very old error known as Sabellianism or Modalism, or known as the Monothelite error a little later in the Church's history —the heresies that deny any true personality to the

Three Persons in the Trinity, and make of what we distinguish as Three Persons only modes or manifestations of the activity of the same Person —" the one Soul," as Mr. Boyd Scott says. Quite consistently some of the above-mentioned theologians, *e.g.* Boyd Scott, would deny that there can be any real Personality attributed to God at all—because personality means clear-cut distinctions between persons such as these theologians deny when they confuse the Holy Spirit with the Spirit of Christ. The curious thing is that men like Canon Streeter are convinced of the real and the true distinction between the Father and the Son, although they would obliterate all distinction of persons between Christ and the Holy Spirit. It seems a legitimate conclusion from their writings that men like Canon Streeter and Professor Moffatt believe that there are but two Persons in the Godhead—not three. The late Principal Denney in his earlier life agreed with the position of Streeter, Moffatt, and Boyd Scott, but in his last book, *Atonement and Reconciliation*, Denney wanders still farther from any real belief in the Holy Spirit. He makes in that book this astounding statement:

> " In spite of the creeds, there is no such expression in the New Testament as believing in the Holy Ghost. The Spirit is not an

> object of faith like Christ or God, it is an experience which comes to people through faith. Whether we judge from the accounts in the Book of Acts or in the Epistles of St. Paul, it was a vivid emotional experience. The Spirit was an experience in which believers were the subjects of a divine excitement in which their life was raised to a new power."

In this paragraph Dr. Denney not only denies the personality of the Holy Spirit, he denies His very existence. To him the Spirit is only the name of a psychological process, the technical name for a religious experience. Professor Harnack in his book on the Apostles' Creed, maintains a very similar view, that "the authors of the Creed did not conceive the Holy Ghost as a Person, but as a gift and a power." And further Harnack says: "No proof can be shown that about the middle of the second century the Holy Ghost was believed in as a Person. . . . In the Creed, the Holy Ghost is conceived of as a gift, but as a gift by which the Divine life is offered to the believer, for the Spirit of God is God Himself." Now I am convinced that both Denney and Harnack have fallen into profound error in thus reducing the Holy Spirit to an emotional experience. In the first place, Denney's contention is everywhere

contradicted by Scripture. That the Holy Spirit is no mere influence, no mere impersonal manifestation, but a Divine Person having His place in the Godhead with the Father and the Son, yet being in vital communion with the spirits of men, and that the Holy Spirit is not merely the Spirit of Christ, but a Person distinct from Christ, is abundantly evident from the teaching of the New Testament. The most complete teaching about the Holy Spirit is contained in the Fourth Gospel, and especially in John xiv. to xvi. There we learn that the Spirit is ὁ Παράκλητος—a Person whom Christ shall send to be the comforter and friend of man. In the Johannine teaching this Holy Spirit is God, just as Christ is God—but God in a different person, and Christ and the Holy Spirit cannot be used as interchangeable terms. Is not this the real meaning of such a passage as John xiv. 16, 17: "And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of Truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it knoweth Him not: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you"? That the Spirit is not identical with Christ is evident from these texts from St. John's Gospel: John xvi. 26, "But when the Comforter is come whom I will send unto you

from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me"; John xvi. 7, "Nevertheless I tell you the truth: It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you." In view of such explicit statements as these, clearly affirming that the Holy Spirit is a Divine Person, it is difficult to see what justification Dean Inge can have for the astonishing statements (*Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, vol. i. p. 891): "It is quite useless to ask whether, for St. John, the Paraclete is a distinct hypostasis in the Godhead. . . . The category of personality is quite foreign to the evangelist, as to his whole school." Rather we prefer to agree with Professor Swete (*The Holy Spirit in the New Testament*): "That He fulfils the whole of our Lord's personal functions towards the Church, that He belongs to the category of Paraclete—Teacher, Director, Protector, Counsellor—this invests Him with all the essential attributes of what we understand by personality."

But though, as might be expected from its later date, we get in St. John's Gospel a fuller, more developed, and more philosophical teaching about the Holy Spirit than in the earlier books—yet the same teaching precisely is found in less developed

form in the Synoptic Gospels. Luke xi. 13: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." Here certainly the Holy Spirit is spoken of as a gift, but the context clearly shows that it is the gift of a Person. Again, there is an absolute distinction between the Person of Christ and the Person of the Holy Spirit in Matthew xii. 32, "And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come." And although Dr. Denney asserts that in the Pauline teaching the Spirit of Christ and the Holy Spirit are identical, there is, I think, abundant evidence to lead us to a different conclusion—the conclusion, namely, that the Pauline teaching is in accord with that of the four Gospels, in teaching that the Holy Spirit is the Third Person in the Godhead, one with God in substance, but possessing a distinct Personality of His own.

When studying St. Paul's teaching on the Spirit, we must always remember that he never knew Christ after the flesh, but it was only as the Holy Spirit revealed Christ to him that he knew Christ at all. And so overwhelmed is he by the revela-

tion of Christ that the Spirit has given him, that he does not to any extent develop a doctrine of the Holy Spirit at all. And yet he never confuses the two Persons—Christ and the Holy Spirit. There is one instance where he might be accused of confusing the Persons (Gal. iv. 6): "God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father"; but if we take the genitive in "the Spirit of His Son" as an objective genitive, meaning, not the Christ Spirit, *i.e.* the Spirit that was in Christ, but the Spirit given by Christ, St. Paul's teaching becomes quite plain. What St. Paul here teaches is that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son as well as from the Father, as the Western Church has always believed—that is, the Holy Spirit conveys to man what is Christ's will as well as what is the Heavenly Father's will. Therefore St. Paul supports in this passage the late Western Creeds which insert the "filioque" clause in the statement of the procession of the Holy Spirit. So also in Romans viii., if we read that chapter as a whole, we shall see the necessity of separating the Holy Spirit from the Spirit of Christ. The Spirit of adoption is given unto us by Christ, that chapter teaches, and it is this Spirit that helpeth our infirmities, making intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. To sum up this brief and incomplete

survey of the New Testament teaching on the Holy Spirit, the invariable testimony is to the fact of the Holy Spirit being regarded as a real Person, distinct on the one hand from a mere emotional or psychological experience, though frequently the influence of the Holy Spirit and the effect of the Holy Spirit's working are described as producing marvellous psychological phenomena in man. On the grounds of Biblical Criticism and Exegesis therefore we must dismiss the view of the Holy Spirit held among others by Moberley, Moffatt, Denney, Streeter, and Boyd Scott.

2. Turning now to consider the averment of Professor Harnack that in the formulation of the Creed there was no thought of the Holy Ghost as a Person, and that about the middle of the second century there was no sign of belief in the Church in the Holy Ghost as a personality—the erroneous nature of Harnack's contention has been well shown by Dr. H. B. Swete in his book on the Apostles' Creed. Dr. Swete shows that the real personality of the Holy Spirit was believed in by St. Clement of Rome, who wrote in his Epistle to the Corinthians: "Have we not one God and one Christ, and one Spirit of grace which was poured upon us"—where the Spirit is put on precisely the same plane as the Father and the Son, and clearly distinguished from both as a separate entity.

Farther on in the same Epistle, Clement writes: "As God lives, and the Lord Jesus Christ lives, and the Holy Spirit, the faith and hope of the elect"; thus attributing a separate personal life to the Holy Spirit from the Father. So also the "Letter of the Churches of Lyons and Vienne," written 177 A.D., dealing with the Montanist heretics and their belief in the Spirit, as quoted by Eusebius (*Eccl. Hist.*, bk. v. ch. 1) with regard to a Montanist, Vettius Epagathus: "They called him the Christian's advocate, and he had 'the Advocate' (*Παράκλητος*) within him"; thus testifying to a belief in a personal Paraclete. Tertullian defines the personality of the Holy Spirit most clearly in his "Rule of Faith." He says, *e.g.*, "We believe, being better instructed by the Paraclete, the Leader into all truth . . ."; then follows a statement of the Holy Trinity with a reference to the Third Person in these terms: "Christ who hath sent thence, according to His promise, from the Father, the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, the Sanctifier of the faith of those who believe on the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." Origen also bears witness to the separate personality of the Holy Spirit. Therefore Harnack's assertions are not true to the fact. But the Early Church, rightly interpreting the New Testament, contended strongly for the real existence of the Holy Ghost

as a Person. It is interesting to note, as Dr. Swete does, that "Arianism was in the first instance a protest against the Sabellian confusion of the Persons."

The first Synod of Sirmium anathematises those who speak of the Three as "one person," or identify the Holy Ghost with the Ingenerate God, or call Him a part of the Father or of the Son; whilst, on the other hand, it equally condemns a proposition which the Church Catholic has never tolerated nor supported, that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are three Gods.

But now we must turn to consider the recrudescence of Sabellianism, to which reference has already been made, which involves the denial of any real existence to the Holy Spirit at all—the view, that the Spirit of God is simply the revelation of God immanent in the world—not having any personality, but rather being the pantheistic substance of God as He reveals Himself in man and in the world. Among present-day philosophers this view finds much favour. Professor Pringle-Pattison, for example, writes: "It is to my mind a great misfortune that the 'spirit of God,' the influence of God in the human soul, the mystic presence of the Lord in the heart of His followers, should have been materialised so as to suggest a third personality or agency distinct

from Father and Son. The conception of the Spirit is, in fact, the final and complete account of the one God as the Father of spirits, their Creator, Inspirer, and Redeemer." That to Professor Pattison the Spirit is but a manifestation everywhere of God in the world is evident from this sentence at the end of his essay in Canon Streeter's book, *The Spirit*: "This idea of perfection disclosing its features gradually as men became able to apprehend the vision is the immanent God, the inspiring Spirit, to whom all progress is due." Miss Lily Dougall, in the same book, also comes to the conclusion that the great discovery of Jesus was just that He recognised this immanent Spirit of God. She says: "He saw that this Divine Spirit was at the same time the emotion that surges up into the practice of parental kindness, the instinctive wit of all true love, and also the eternal source and goal of all." Now the logical conclusion of all such theories is a pantheism as complete as that of Swinburne, the pagan among the modern poets, which he expresses in his poem "Hertha":

> "I am that which began
> Out of me the years roll;
> Out of me God and man;
> I am equal and whole.
> God changes and man, and the form of them bodily
> I am the soul.

I am the mark that is missed
And the arrows that miss;
I, the mouth that is kissed
And the breath in the kiss,
The search, and the sought, and the seeker,
The soul and the body that is."

This theory would make the Holy Spirit to be almost equivalent to Spinoza's "divine substance," or to Emerson's Over-Soul—the one ultimate reality behind the phenomenal world, the power that commands all natural law, but a something, a Divine essence that is entirely non-personal and pantheistic. Now there is a whole world of difference between this intangible Divine Something which these thinkers would call the Holy Spirit and the Person revealed as the Holy Spirit in the New Testament, as described, for example, in the well-known hymn beginning:

"Our blest Redeemer, ere He breathed
His tender, last farewell,
A Guide, a Comforter, bequeathed
With us to dwell."

For whatever conception of the Holy Spirit we derive from the New Testament, it cannot be this abstraction, this thought of the essence of Deity, so to speak, that is in all things, through all things, and the cause of all things. Such a saying as that regarding blasphemy against the Holy Ghost becomes simply void of all meaning to those who have a conception of the Holy Spirit as an im-

personal abstraction of this sort. Whereas, if we accept the view taught in the New Testament, that the Holy Spirit is God in man—a real Divine Personality guiding us to the knowledge of the truth (John xvi. 13), speaking to us in the voice of conscience (John xiv. 26, xvi. 8), helping us in prayer to come into true fellowship with God (Rom. viii. 26)—the saying regarding blasphemy against the Holy Ghost becomes full of rich meaning for us. It means simply that there can be no forgiveness for him who, knowing the right, and having heard the Holy Spirit speak to him in his conscience, yet openly and flagrantly refuses to follow the Spirit's guidance, but deliberately defies God speaking to him in his heart.

The medieval theologians were partly responsible for this impersonal view of the Holy Spirit, that still exists to-day, in that they identified the Spirit of God in the Old Testament with the personal Holy Ghost of the New Testament. The רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים, the Spirit of God that moved upon the face of the waters in Genesis i. 3, may have been a cosmic conception similar to that held by Professor Pringle-Pattison, but there is no reason in the world for identifying such a conception with the Paraclete, the Comforter, the Third Person in the Trinity that our Lord revealed.

Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to suppose

that the Holy Spirit had no real existence, and was not at work in the world, till Christ came to reveal His Presence, or to suppose that before Pentecost the Holy Spirit was not given to man. Just as we saw that Christ as God must have had a real existence before His Incarnation, so if we think of the Holy Spirit as God, He must have had a real existence from all eternity. And as we read the inspired visions of the prophets of the Old Testament we feel that these men were truly inspired by the Holy Ghost, that it was God speaking in their souls and consciences, as the Holy Spirit gave them utterance. This was clearly recognised by the prophets themselves, *e.g.* Ezekiel ii. 2, "The Spirit entered into me, when He spake to me"; Isaiah lxi. 1, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me"; Ezekiel iii. 12, "Then the Spirit took me up, and I heard." For these reasons, then, we must reject the modern philosophical view of the Holy Spirit as a mere influence, and hold fast to the view of the eternal existence of the Spirit as a Person in the Godhead.

And now, finally, I want to show that the Holy Spirit as revealed in the New Testament, the Holy Spirit as a Person in the Godhead coequal with the Father and the Son, whose work and function it is to dwell with man and be his guide, communicating to him directly the Divine grace—

I want to show that such a conception satisfies a very real craving in our souls, just as we saw that the conception of Christ as God Incarnate was necessary for the satisfaction of our aspirations. When we look into our own hearts, and think deeply about life, we have to admit that man is a lonely creature, and the higher we climb in the scale of existence the more we feel our loneliness. On earth, there is nothing to satisfy us. We have one craving deeper than all else, a craving for the Infinite. We may try to drown or drug that craving, as Carlyle tried to do with his gospel of Work; or, in knowledge, in culture, in philosophy and its maxims, we may seek to satisfy it. But the craving of the human heart cannot thus be satisfied. The yearning of the soul is for that which is ethically perfect and intensely personal—in short, for a personal God. And even though we have found in Christ, the Incarnation of God; in Christ, the Redeemer of the world saving mankind by His redemptive love; in Christ, the Saviour bearing all man's sorrows and sins on the Cross—though we have found in Christ a partial satisfaction for our yearning, yet to the soul that explores the depths and rises to the heights, the soul that cries to God *de profundis*, the satisfaction cannot be complete. For, though we may look to Christ as our Elder Brother, who divinely bore

our sorrows and carried our griefs, though we believe that "in every pang that rends the heart, the Man of Sorrows had a part"—yet are we still sometimes oppressed by the thought of our "aloneness." After all, how can I be sure that I know Christ aright? How can I be certain, with my poor finite nature, that I am not suffering from a terrible delusion when thinking of Christ as I do? How can I be sure that my decision as to what is right and good is really in accordance with the will of God? How can I, a poor sinner, have any real fellowship with the sinless Son of God, "who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity"?

The only thought that will give us satisfaction and drive away our fears and loneliness is the conception that the New Testament reveals to us of the Holy Spirit as God speaking directly to our souls, in the voice of conscience. For then are we assured that the voice within us is the voice of God, that our knowledge of right and wrong is not dependent on any moral imperative, such as Immanuel Kant was compelled to invent to explain our moral nature, but that knowledge of the truth comes to us direct from God speaking in our souls through the Holy Spirit. It is only when we come to understand the meaning of the New Testament teaching about the Holy Spirit; only when we come to believe that God, the Holy Spirit, comes

to us as our Guide in perplexity, speaks to us in our consciences, comforts us in our sorrows, reveals to us the truth about Christ and things Divine; only when we become convinced that the soul that surrenders itself to Divine guidance is being indeed and in truth divinely guided by a Spirit, who is as truly personal, and as truly sympathetic with our sorrows and agonies as Christ is, as truly God as the Heavenly Father is; only when we come to realise that such a Spirit as this is giving revelations of the truth to Christian men and women now, just as He revealed it on the Day of Pentecost; only when we come to realise that the work of the Holy Spirit in guiding the Church is not yet over, but that He is still leading, warning, encouraging, helping, and comforting us, *as God in our inner souls*—only when we have come to these convictions, will our souls find perfect peace, and we shall know of a surety that "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" (Gal. v. 22, 23).

CHAPTER XI

THE BELIEF IN THE CHURCH

"The Holy Catholic Church."

THE clause concerning belief in the Church was late in establishing for itself a place in the Apostles' Creed. It is not till about 400 A.D. that the words, "holy catholic Church," occur in the Creed, making their first appearance in the symbol of Niceta, and being found in all subsequent versions of the Creed. In the earlier forms of the symbol of the Western Church, belief in the Church is mentioned occasionally, but always without the addition of the word "catholic." In the old Roman Creed, as in Rufinus of Rome, *circa* 400 A.D., Marcellus of Rome, *circa* 340 A.D., and Rufinus of Aquileia, *circa* 400 A.D., the belief in the Church is expressed in the words, "sanctam Ecclesiam," or ἁγίαν ἐκκλησίαν. In the credal passages of the Latin Fathers of earlier date, no belief in the Holy Church is mentioned. In the Eastern Church, however, the phrase, "holy catholic Church," had long been familiar, though

it did not always enter into the earlier Eastern Creeds. The words are absent from the Creed of Nicæa, 325 A.D., but in the Creed of Cyril of Jerusalem, 348 A.D., occur the words *καὶ εἰς μίαν ἁγίαν καθολικὴν ἐκκλησίαν*; and in the Creed of Constantinople the word "apostolic" was added, the later form of the Eastern symbol expressing belief in "one holy catholic and apostolic Church." It is highly probable, though of this we have no direct evidence, that the clause regarding the Church found its way into the Apostles' Creed from the later Creeds of the Eastern Church. But although the clause does not enter into the earliest credal statements, the belief in the holy catholic Church was an essential doctrine to the early Fathers. For example, in the Apostolical Constitutions, *circa* 350 A.D., belief is expressed that the Holy Spirit was sent unto all believers "in the holy catholic Church." So also St. Cyprian of Carthage phrases his creed, "Dost thou believe . . . through the Holy Church?" Tertullian uses the phrase, "catholica ecclesia," and even earlier it is found in the Muratorian Canon. The "holy Church" enters largely into the imagery of the "Shepherd" of Hermas, and Justin Martyr also employs the term.

Let us examine the Christian evidences for the belief in the holy catholic Church. First of all,

the word καθολίκη is not scriptural. In the New Testament it occurs only in the headings of the so-called Catholic Epistles in some of the later uncial MSS., but it is found nowhere else in New Testament writings. It appears first in Christian literature in the writings of the Apostolical Fathers. What the Church of the fourth century meant by the term "Catholic Church" is explained in the writings of Cyril of Jerusalem, who says: "The Church is called Catholic, because she extends through the whole world, from one end of the earth to the other." So also St. Faustini, a Gallican theologian of the fitfh century, defines the catholic Church in these terms: "What is the Catholic Church, but the people who have been dedicated to God throughout the world? As different members make up the completeness of the human body, so a variety of races and nations, agreeing in one faith, form the one body of Christ." Thus the word "catholic" to the framers of the Creed had no connection with the See of Rome, or the religion of the Roman Church, with which it is now unfortunately so often associated, but meant simply the universal Church among different nations, speaking different languages, yet holding one and the same faith. The very fact that, as we have seen, the phrase "catholic Church" originated in Eastern Christendom shows

that the term had absolutely no connection with Rome.

But from the third century onwards, the growth of heresy made it necessary that the orthodox Church should have some term to differentiate it from heretical sects, and the term adopted was "Catholic," the reason being that whereas heretical opinions were held only by a small and limited sect, usually found in only one district, the true faith was found everywhere, being universally believed. Thus by the time that the term "catholic" was added to the definition of the "holy Church" in the Creed, some time in the fifth century, it had acquired an exclusive connotation. As Dr. Swete says: "It embraced all Christian communities which held fast by the Apostolic doctrine and discipline, but shut the door against those who rejected either. Neither the Arian nor the Donatist could claim to belong to a Church which was defined as Catholic. Possibly it was the exclusiveness of the term quite as much as its comprehensiveness which commended it to the post-Augustinian Church."

When we turn to the evidence of the New Testament, we find that the conception of "a holy catholic Church" was continually present both to the mind of Christ and to the mind of Paul. Consider first the Pauline teaching. It is clear from

Ephesians v. and 1 Corinthians i. that St. Paul had a clear idea of the Church as a divinely inspired organism. He teaches that it is the Body of Christ on earth; or, again, he describes it as the Bride of Christ, owning Christ as Head and Ruler, and receiving all its inspiration from Him. The members of the Church are those who have been chosen in Christ to be holy and without blemish, who have a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, who by lowliness and meekness keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Paul dwells much on the essential unity of the Christian Church. "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling: one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all" (Eph. iv. 4–6). And this unity is natural to the Church, in the Pauline teaching, not imposed from without, but the natural result of a real loyalty to Christ. There is considerable development of the idea of an organised Church as a working institution in the Pastoral Epistles. It is described as "the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. iii. 15), and the Church in the Pastoral Epistles has begun to function as an institution. It has its regular presbyters, bishops, and deacons; it exercises discipline; its worship has become organised, and the laws governing its whole life and activities have

become defined. The Church in the Pastoral Epistles shows a great development from the primitive meetings of Christians after Pentecost as described in Acts—when the Church had not even a name, and Christians were variously called "brethren," "this way" (Acts ix. 2, xix. 9–23, xxii. 4), or "believers" (Acts v. 11, viii. 11, xi. 26).

It has been said that the idea of an organised Church was never in the mind of Christ at all, that He had no thought of founding an institution like the Church as we know it. But the evidence of the Gospels is all against such a conception. The ideal Church was certainly in the mind of Christ when He said, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd" (John x. 16). The word ἐκκλησία only occurs twice in the Canonical Gospels—both times in St. Matthew's Gospel—Matt. xvi. 18, "On this rock I will build My Church," and Matt. xviii. 17, "Tell it to the Church: and if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be to thee as an heathen man and a publican." But in every other book of the New Testament the word "Church" is frequently met with, and there is no doubt that, from the Day of Pentecost onwards, the founding of Churches composed of believing men and women was regarded as one of the principal objects in the

propaganda of Christians of the first century. In order to survive in the world, Christianity had to be embodied in an institution, and gradually as time went on the laws governing the life of that institution became more clearly defined. The medieval theologians no doubt attached an exaggerated importance to the Church as an institution, and gave a rather limited interpretation to their phrase, "extra ecclesiam, nulla salus," but, taken in a broad sense, the words contain a fundamental truth — that Christianity cannot be lived or practised *in vacuo*, or in isolation. A "Church" of some sort is necessary for its very existence, and even those Christian sects that deny that the founding of a Church has any sanction from Christ's teaching, find that they must meet together in an assembly, a gathering of the brethren of some sort, as in the fellowship of silence of a Quaker meeting, which is a "Church" in embryo.

But the important question is, What kind of community had our Lord in view, or what kind of institution did He desire to found? To answer these questions we must seek a true interpretation of the words of our Lord in Matthew's Gospel, concerning the Church, which have been quoted above. What is the meaning of the Church as being founded on St. Peter? Though attempts have been made to reject this verse as not forming

an integral part of St. Matthew's Gospel, these attempts break down when they are examined. The words are contained in every known MS. The whole symbolism of the verse is Jewish, and the utterance has a ring of authenticity when compared with the rest of the teaching of Jesus. The change of the name Simon to Peter, and the universal use of the latter name for the Apostle in Christian literature, is an indication that the change denoted some great epoch-making event in that Apostle's life, as in the Old Testament the change in the name of Abram and Sarai.

Accepting the words as genuine, we come to the question of their interpretation. The Roman Catholic interpretation of the verse, and of the verses which follow, is that our Lord founded the Church on Peter, as a person—"Thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build My Church"—and so the Roman Church has elaborated the dogma that St. Peter, the first Bishop of Rome, and his successors in office speak with the inspired voice of Christ Himself. Speaking *ex cathedra*, the Popes are absolutely infallible, and their word is to be obeyed as the voice of God. Of all the medieval Popes, Hildebrand carried the dogma of the Roman Church to its most logical conclusion. He looked upon his authority as paramount over all life, since the power of the keys given by our

Lord to St. Peter had been handed on to him in virtue of his office. And so over things temporal, as over things spiritual, he was to exercise an unquestioned authority. He could make laws or break them as he willed. By the Church's infallible guidance the world's activities were to be directed. The final appeal on all matters of difference was to be to the Church's, *i.e.* the Pope's, authority, and no man dare question even the most apparently outrageous act or judgment of him who sits in St. Peter's chair. The decree of the Vatican Council of 1870 proclaiming the infallibility of the Papacy in all doctrines of faith and morals—though more limited in scope than the universal infallibility claimed by Hildebrand—is the necessary corollary of the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Church, as founded on St. Peter and his successors in office. How this doctrine of the Church has worked out in practice, how utterly far it has led the Papacy, on many occasions in its history, from the teaching of the Carpenter of Nazareth, are matters of history on which we need not stay to comment. Suffice it to say that the whole history of the Church, and the emergence of Protestantism as the vindicator of "liberty of conscience," condemn the Roman Catholic interpretation of Christ's words as being grievously in error.

The usual interpretation of the passage in St. Matthew's Gospel given by Protestant scholars is that the Church was founded by our Lord on St. Peter as being *typical* of those who would be members of that Church. St. Peter had the insight to confess that Jesus was the Christ, Son of the living God. All who make that confession, all who have the faith and insight of St. Peter into Christ's true nature, though they may be weak, impulsive, fallible men as he was, will form themselves into communities, and these communities will be the Church of Christ.

The Reformers, speaking generally, had a much more legalistic doctrine of the Church than this. The Church to Martin Luther is simply "the congregation of the elect," an idea that he borrowed from Augustine's "congregatio sanctorum," and Luther interprets the power of the keys given to the Church as the authority possessed by the elect to discriminate between truth and error. Wherever the Word of God is rightly preached and the sacraments duly administered, there is a true Church in Lutheran theology, and the priesthood of all believers as part of the doctrine of the Church makes the validity of the Church independent of a continuous Apostolic succession of ordained clergy. The Calvinistic doctrine is very similar in essentials to the Lutheran. Christ is the only

Head of the Church. The Gospel of grace, manifested in the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments, is the manifestation of the life of the visible Church, and to some extent at least the priesthood of all believers enters into the Calvinistic doctrine. Both the Calvinistic and the Lutheran conceptions err by being too definite and legalistic in conception. A true interpretation of the words, " the holy catholic Church," of the Creed will, as we shall try to show, leave the limits and definition of function of the Church far less defined than either Luther or Calvin described them.

The first designation of the Church in the Creed is that it should be " Holy." The word " holy " as applied to the Church means, in accordance with New Testament usage, that it should be consecrated to Christ, and filled with the Holy Ghost. It means, further, that the Church was to be perpetuated in the world by those men who possessed in a peculiar degree Christ's own Spirit, who in all things suffered themselves to be led by the Holy Spirit. The word does not mean that the Church visible is to be made up exclusively of saints, but even though its members be sinful, the general aim of the Church to produce holiness in the world is sufficient to justify the description of the Church as holy. The Roman Catholic

theologians explain the holiness of the Church by saying that the Church is to be identified with the Kingdom of God. But such an identification is never made in the New Testament, but rather the Church is always described as the institution God will use to bring that Kingdom into being. The best definition of the Church in modern theology is that given by Professor Oman: "It is the society of those who already realise the blessings of the Kingdom of God in their hearts—pardon, grace, joy—and are so sure it will come in fulness that they can live as if it actually were come, and so can disregard the whole question of visible power, organise themselves wholly on the basis of love, and leave all issues with God" (article "Church," *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*).

One essential difference between the statement of the Apostles' Creed on the doctrine of the Church and the statement of that doctrine in the later Creeds of the East is that, whereas the latter emphasise that the Church must be Apostolic, *i.e.* able to trace back its lineage in unbroken succession to the Apostles by a chain of regularly ordained presbyters, the Apostles' Creed has no word to say of Apostolic succession, as being necessary to the validity of the Church's ministry, and so the vexed question of the validity of orders and the validity of forms of ordination is not

raised at all in the Apostles' Creed. If we take the words of Christ in St. Matthew's Gospel in too narrow a sense and interpret them to mean, as the Roman, Greek, and Episcopal Churches interpret them, that apart from the original Apostolic band and their successors there can be no valid Church —then we rule out the greatest Apostle of all, as a regular minister of the Church. For St. Paul, after the vision of Christ was given to him as to one born out of due time, and even before his period of preparation for the ministry in Arabia, began to preach without any authority from the Apostles. In Acts ix. 20, before he left Damascus, we read, "Straightway he preached Christ in the synagogue that He is the Son of God." And the ordination of Paul along with Barnabas to the holy ministry of the Church did not take place till much later, as recounted in Acts xiii. 2, 3. And both Paul and Barnabas are afterwards described as Apostles, of the same rank and order as the Twelve, though they were ordained by the provincial Church of Antioch.

But to the Twelve a direct commission was given by Christ to go forth and preach, to heal diseases and exorcise evil spirits. To three of them was given the privilege of seeing Christ transfigured in glory, and to one especially was given the responsibility of being the prototype of the Church of

Christ. When Judas apostatised, the Eleven proceeded to fill up their ranks by selecting another Apostle in his place, and throughout the Acts of the Apostles the Twelve are represented as giving their recognition to new movements of the Holy Spirit, holding themselves responsible for seeing that the Christian experience is kept pure and entire, and advising the whole Church in cases of dispute. They represented the principles of cohesion, continuity, and unity, and they took the responsibility of pronouncing judgment on matters of faith and order. And these principles of continuity, centrality, and unity are still as necessary as ever, and the modern restless thinkers who wish to have Christianity preserved, but not the Church, are doomed to see their faith dissipated, simply because without the Church these three essential qualities for continuance must be lost.

And yet no sooner was this responsible order of Apostles established in the infant Church than it was faced by the phenomenon of St. Paul, claiming not only conversion, but a direct call to the Apostolate, and therefore a place in the supreme councils of the Church. The admission of St. Paul to the Apostolate shows that the Twelve were ready to recognise the working of God anywhere, however surprising and unexpected it might be. Thus in the Apostolic Church we have the two great

principles recognised—on the one hand, the normal and traditional order, the continuous link going back to St. Peter; and on the other hand, the free admission of those who have received a special revelation or gift from God, who are also to be regarded as being in every true sense His ministers. Those who declare that they love Christ, and yet stand aloof from His Church, might well be asked how their attitude coincides with Christ's love for the Church, and whether their action, if universally followed, would not sound the death-knell of the Christian religion as a power in the world. May it not be that much of the hostility shown by intellectual people to the organised Church in these days is due to laziness, a desire to be excused from tackling the difficult problem of making the present institution of the organised Church more like the ideal Church Christ desired to found—namely, a Church that is continuous with the past and filled with the Holy Spirit in the present, that stands equally for order and liberty, that strives to remain in fellowship with all Christians whatsoever who grant supreme headship to Christ, and who try to be completely catholic in the true sense of that word?

In one other respect the doctrine of the Church as expressed in the Apostles' Creed differs from the doctrine of the Church of Eastern Christendom.

The Eastern Church emphasises in its later Creeds the unity of the Church—"*one*, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church," whereas no such explicit mention of the Church's unity is made in the Western symbol. The reason for the difference in statement is to be found in early Church history. The Church of the East had an unfortunate history in the early centuries, in that its unity was destroyed by schismatic and heretical Churches coming into existence. Both Nestorians and Arians founded Churches of their own, and the Nestorian Church still survives in Mesopotamia to-day. In the West, in the first three centuries the question of the unity of the Church was never raised, hence the absence of reference to the unity of the Church in the Apostles' Creed.

But unfortunately the history of the Church of the West since the Reformation has been a melancholy history of the break-up of all unity in the Church, cleavage after cleavage taking place, till all sense of catholic unity in the Church has well-nigh disappeared from modern Christianity. Though, as is apparent from 1 Corinthians i., tendencies to schism were present in the Apostolic Church, yet those who followed the different leaders in the Corinthian Church did not destroy the unity of the fellowship of the Church by separating into sects, but remained as one body, sharing the same

sacraments, and partaking in the common worship. St. Paul, more than any other New Testament writer, realised the necessity of Christian unity, and a study of his teaching—as, *e.g.*, in Eph. iv. 1–6; 1 Cor. i. 11–17, iii., x. 17, xii. 12–27; Rom. xii. 4, 5; Gal. iii. 28—demonstrates what he conceived to be the nature of that unity. Paul thought of the whole Church as possessing a common worship of God, holding a common faith, observing the same sacraments, looking to the same hope in Christ, possessed of the same loyalty to Him, as a common Master of all, and every branch of the Church inspired and guided by the same indwelling Holy Spirit. But St. Paul clearly conceived the unity of the Church as an organic, not a mechanical unity, as his metaphor of the body and its members shows. There was to be no attempt to enforce uniformity by external pressure as the Roman Church has tried so hard to do. But, on the other hand, the unity was a real one, more than that implied by the affiliation of different communities having no organic relations with each other. In other words, the Pauline conception of the unity of the Church is something more than co-operation, and something more than an invisible subjective unity which is all that some Protestant theologians aim at. Such co-operation without partaking the same common life, sharing

the same sacraments, worship, government, and discipline, would stand for very little, in the mind of St. Paul.

How to restore that organic unity to the Church of Christ, without impairing Christian liberty, and without asking the renunciation of any sincerely held convictions is the paramount problem of Christendom to-day — a problem for which no adequate solution has yet been found. The World Conference on Faith and Order and the Lambeth Conference of Bishops have been exploring the difficulties that lie in the way. But the true unity of the Christian Church will not be achieved by way of Conferences, or by way of so-called broad-mindedness, or by agreements to compromise. The true unity of the Church will only come into being by Christendom coming to realise in a new way the holiness and the Catholicity of the Church as the Body of Christ. Not by maintaining an outward semblance of unity, but rather by infusing into the Church more of the spirit of Christ, will the goal be achieved. Just as in the Holy Trinity there is diversity in unity, perfect freedom, no constraint, no attempt to supress personality, so the ideal reunited Church will be moulded, as a fellowship like unto the fellowship of the Three Persons in the Godhead. The ideal Church will have room for diversities of

temperament and interest. It will not impose rigorous laws of uniformity, nor seek a world-wide sameness in details of worship and government. But the ideal Church will be united into an organic unity by the bonds of perfect love, and each branch of the Church redeemed from self-interest will labour for the good of the whole, respecting those who differ, and believing that just as all men cannot be alike, so all Churches cannot be alike, each branch will labour to produce a divine harmony of different notes instead of the monotony of one note continuously sounded. This divine harmony, so clearly seen in St. Paul's conception of organic unity, will be the result of the putting into practice by Churchmen the world over of Christ's law of love. If the love of God possessed the Churches of Christendom to-day as it possessed the Apostolic Church, there would be no need to search for a creed or formula on which the Churches could unite. The "holy catholic Church" would have come into being, simply through Christians the world over uniting in Christ's service, owning no Master nor Head but Him, and believing that, led by the Spirit of God, love will break every barrier down and unite all Christendom to bring the Kingdom of God into being in this world.

CHAPTER XII

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE CHURCH VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE

"The Communion of Saints."

THE insertion of the clause, "the communion of saints," into the Apostles' Creed did not take place till the beginning of the fifth century. The words occur first in the Creed of Niceta, Bishop of Rimisiana, in Dacia, about 400 A.D., and are found in all Gallican and Western forms of the symbol of the Apostles after that date. That the phrase originated in the Western Church seems certain, because the words do not occur in any of the Eastern Creeds. The exact reason of the insertion of the clause is uncertain. The words *ἁγίων κοινωνίαν* are not scriptural, and the phrase is not found in the Apostolical Fathers. Not till the time of Tertullian, *circa* 200 A.D., do we find anything like a doctrine of "communion of saints" developed in Christian literature, and in none of the Eastern Fathers is the doctrine ever alluded to. What did those who introduced the words into the Creed understand

by them? Niceta, in a homily quoted by Caspari (*Anecdota* 1), says: "What is the Church, but the congregation of all saints (*sanctorum omnium congregatio*)? Patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, all the just, who have been, are, or shall be, are one Church, because, sanctified by one faith and life, marked by One Spirit, they constitute one body. Believe, then, that in this one Church thou wilt attain the communion of saints." Thus Niceta seems to have regarded the communion of saints as an amplification of the "holy catholic Church" to include that fellowship of the blessed, which later theology designated as the Church invisible. A similar interpretation is given in a sermon attributed to St. Augustine (Sermon 214; cf. also his *De Civitate Dei*, i. 35). In the Church of Gaul, where the doctrine was specially taught, the communion of saints soon came to be narrowed in meaning to include only those of the faithful who had suffered martyrdom, and the doctrine was made the basis for the worship of the holy dead and the adoration of saints which occupies so prominent a place in the Roman Catholic ritual of to-day. The growth of this new cult is traceable in the Gallican medieval Churchmen, and the doctrine becomes more and more exaggerated as time goes on. It begins quite simply as, *e.g.*, in a homily of Faustus,

Bishop of Riez, which is quoted by Caspari[1]: "Let us believe in the communion of saints, not as though they shared the prerogatives of God, but for the honour of God: let us do homage to the fear and love of God manifested in them: they are worthy of our veneration, inasmuch as by their contempt for death they induce in us a spirit of devotion to God and of eager longing for the life to come." This is sound and wholesome teaching, but the seed of saint-worship was there, which was soon to grow up into a lusty plant in the Gallican and English Church. Those who refuse thus to honour the saints and their ashes, according to another Gallican commentator, and who do not hold that the glorious memory of the blessed martyrs is to be cherished by doing honour to their tombs, "Are false to their Creed, and have given the lie to the promise which they made to Christ at the font" (quoted by Caspari, p. 273).[1] Here we have revealed the motive behind such a medieval institution as the Canterbury pilgrimage, and the profitable occupation of the Pardoner, so satirically described by Chaucer:

> "He hadde a croys of latoun, ful of stones,
> And in a glas he hadde pigges bones;
> But with these relickes whan that he fand
> A poore persoan dwelling up-on lond,
> Up-on a day he gat him more moneye
> Than that the parson gat in monthes tweye;

[1] *Quellen zur Geschichte d. Taufsymbols.*

> And thus with feyned flaterye and Japes
> He made the parson and the people his apes,
> But, trewely to tellen, atte laste
> He was in chirche, a noble ecclesiaste."

But this worship of saints and reverence for relics was a comparatively late development in the Church, and was not, as Harnack surmises, the cause of the introduction of the words "communion of saints" into the Creed. Originally this article was tacked on to the previous one, "I believe in the holy catholic Church," in order further to define the communion with God and with one another of both the living and dead members of the Church. In the later Middle Ages a totally different interpretation of the words "communio sanctorum" is given by some scholastic writers. They take "sanctorum" to be neuter instead of masculine, and understand "communio sanctorum" to mean the communion of sacred elements—the communion of the Body and Blood of Christ in the Sacrament. Thus Peter Abelard (Migne's *Patrologia*, vol. clxxviii.) says: "Possumus et sanctorum dicere neutraliter, id est, sanctificati panis et vini in sacramentum altaris." And several other French theologians of the same period express similar views as to the interpretation of the words. But this view of the "communio sanctorum" seems never to have gained very general recognition in the pre-Reformation

Church, and there is no doubt that it is altogether foreign to the conception of those who inserted the clause into the Apostles' Creed in the fifth century. The interpretation of the "communio sanctorum" according to the Use of Sarum in the "Ordo ad Visitandum Infirmorum" reflects the general doctrine of the Church in the Middle Ages. The definition of the words there given is "that all men who live in charity are partakers of all the gifts of grace which are dispensed in the Church, and that all who are in fellowship with the just here in the life of grace are in fellowship with them in glory." Very similar is the doctrine of the Communion of Saints of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, ch. xxvi. :

> "All saints that are united to Jesus Christ their head by His Spirit, and by faith, have fellowship with Him in His graces, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory. And being united to one another in love they have communion in each other's gifts and graces; and are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, as do conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man. Saints, by profession, are bound to maintain an holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God, and in performing such services as tend to their mutual edifica-

tion; as also in relieving each other in outward things, according to their several abilities and necessities. Which communion, as God offereth opportunity, is to be extended unto all those who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus. This communion which the saints have with Christ doth not make them in any wise partakers of the substance of His Godhead, or to be equal with Christ, in any respect: either of which to affirm is impious and blasphemous. Nor doth their communion one with another, as saints, take away or infringe the title or property which each man hath in his goods and possessions."

The doctrine thus clearly defined is simply an amplification of the definition given of the doctrine by Western theologians of the fifth century at the time when the clause, "the communion of saints," was added to the Creed. And although the words, as we have seen, are neither Biblical nor belonging to the primitive period of the Church's history, they represent, when interpreted as in the *Westminster Confession*, a fundamental doctrine of the Church whose truth can be amply confirmed from the evidences of the New Testament.

Let us consider the different meanings given to the word *κοινωνία*—communion, fellowship in

the New Testament, and thus learn the different conceptions that may legitimately be included in the "communion of saints" of the Apostles' Creed.

1. The word *κοινωνία* is used to denote the fellowship that members of the living Church have with God (1 John i. 3): "Our fellowship is with the Father." The great revelation that Christ had given to the Church was that God is a Father who loves His children. And to enable men to realise this Fatherhood, Christ taught His disciples to pray "Our Father," and instructed them that the Heavenly Father desires to have fellowship with men "who are made in the image of God." Much of the ritual of the Old Testament worship —its sacrifices and sin-offerings—was based on the desire to restore the fellowship of God with man which had been broken by man's sinfulness and disobedience. But though many of the Psalms and the utterances of the Old Testament prophets breathe a longing for fellowship with God (cf. especially Psalms xliv. and lxiii.; Isaiah xl. and lxiv.), yet it was not till Christ came in the fulness of time that there was revealed to man how true fellowship with God might be restored, and how men, in spite of their sins, might through faith in Christ "receive the adoption of sons" of God, and so have true fellowship with the Father.

The adoption, through Christ, of men into fellowship with the Father is a favourite thought in the theology of St. Paul (Gal. iv. 4; Rom. viii. 15). And to St. Paul this access to the Father, this true fellowship with Him which comes to us as His adopted sons, is the privilege of "all saints," that is, of all true members of the Church (Eph. ii. 18, 19): "For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." Thus the fellowship with God of the saints is one of the fruits of the Incarnation and Passion of Christ (1 Pet. iii. 18): "For Christ also suffered . . . that He might bring us to God." And the great supernatural element in the worship of the Church is just the giving of access, through the fellowship of prayer and praise and common worship, into the very presence of Him who is Father of all.

2. A second use of the word *κοινωνία* in the New Testament is to express the fellowship with the living Christ that the members of the Church have the sacred privilege of enjoying in the Sacrament of Holy Communion. The great symbolical act of the sacrament, as St. Paul teaches, is meant to remind us of our real fellowship with Christ our Saviour. It is when Christians are gathered around the

table of Holy Communion that fellowship with Christ becomes most real and precious (1 Cor. x. 16): "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion (*κοινωνία*) of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" But the Holy Communion is far more than a mere symbol of our fellowship with Christ. It is the chief and best means of making effective the communion of the saints in the Church with Christ, their great Elder Brother. For it is at once the most wonderful mystery and the most blessed experience of our Christian religion, that to those who go with humble and penitent expectant hearts to the table of Holy Communion, Christ Himself is present as Spirit with their spirits. They enter into free and untrammelled communion with Him, their living Lord. They have blessed experience of the truth of the promise given in Revelation iii. 20; "If any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." But at the Holy Communion not only do we enter into true fellowship with Christ, but we have experience of two other aspects of the communion of saints, for in that sacrament we have true Christian fellowship with one another. There we meet on terms of an entire equality, the poor with the rich, the young with the aged, the ignorant

with the cultured, and pass from hand to hand—the Cup, the blessed emblem of Christ's blood which was shed for all. Also at the holy table we have experience of fellowship with the departed, with all the company of the redeemed. Of these two aspects of the communion of saints, we shall have more to say shortly. But while we rejoice in all the revelation of the reality of the communion of saints, brought to us sacramentally in the Holy Communion, we must beware of falling into the error of the restricted interpretation of the words that Abelard fell into, and limit the communion of saints solely to the communion of holy things in the sacramental sense. The New Testament teaches that the fellowship of the saints is far wider than that fellowship of God we enjoy at the Holy Eucharist.

3. There is another Pauline use of the term *κοινωνία* to denote the "fellowship of the Holy Spirit." The phrase is used in 2 Corinthians xiii. 14, "the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all," in the Benediction which closes that Epistle, whence it enters into the usual Benediction of the Christian Church. Now the question is, When St. Paul spoke of the communion of the Holy Spirit, did he mean the communion or fellowship of the believer with the Holy Spirit, or did he mean the fellowship of believers with one another,

because they were united into one communion, by their joint possession of the Holy Spirit? The context in the passage just cited from Corinthians leads us to believe that the words of the Benediction are a prayer that the believers may severally and individually enjoy the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, enjoy His guidance in their lives, and by His fellowship become sanctified. It is a prayer that the believers may walk daily with God, their spirits ever holding communion with His Holy Spirit. And the fellowship or communion for which these words intercede is to be the result of the reciprocal action of God and man. It cannot come by Divine action only. God cannot come unbidden to a single human soul. No more can it come by human action merely. But the communion of the Holy Spirit is the result of man's co-operation with God. As St. Paul has striven to express it in Romans viii. 16: "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." The same idea of the necessity of joint action by man and God, in order that fellowship with the Divine may be possible, is expressed in the teaching of Christ when He said, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." And the result of such fellowship with the Holy Spirit as this will be a new realisation of a fellow-

feeling and communion amongst those who have had experience of the fellowship of the Spirit. As St. Paul teaches (Phil. ii. 1–4), one of the inevitable results of such communion with the Divine will be a new spirit of brotherhood in the Church. All will be of one accord, all of one mind. Nothing will be done through strife or vainglory, but in lowliness of mind each shall esteem others better than himself. And this brotherhood as sharers of the fellowship of the Holy Spirit made the Church from the very beginning "the communion of saints."

4. This feeling of oneness as possessors of a common heritage, as joint-sharers in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, was undoubtedly the characteristic feature of the Pentecostal Church. It is described (Acts ii. 42) in the words: "And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship (*κοινωνία*), and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." So also Paul describes it as the "fellowship in the gospel" (Phil. i. 5): "Your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now." It is this fellowship that Paul also calls "the fellowship of faith" (Philem. verse 6, R.V.). This feeling of oneness in the Christian community led to the development of the corporate life of the Church. The individuals felt that each one was an organic unit in the Body of Christ on

earth, and so closely interknit were they, so necessary to one another as members of a corporate whole, that no one could say to another, "I have no need of thee" (1 Cor. xii. 20), but all were members one of another.

And the Church to-day is such a corporate body. Wherever the fellowship of the Holy Spirit exists in the Church, there the communion of saints is realised, and that fellowship embraces the saints of the past, as the saints of the present. We are "the heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ" as St. Paul teaches, and in a very real sense our sharing in the communion of saints makes us to be the inheritors of the piety and wisdom and holiness of all the ages of the Church. From St. Francis of Assisi as from John Bunyan, from William Penn as from John Knox, we have derived something to enrich our inheritance, in the communion of the saints. To quote the beautiful words of Dr. Swete (*The Holy Catholic Church*, pp. 194–195):

> "We can feel that we are richer for the example and work of thousands of saints known to us only in name but, in fact, all who have ever lived in faith are a heritage of priceless value, while all who are now so living are contributing to the strength and well-being of the Church, and we have a share

in their labour of love. Thus the Communion of Saints is far-reaching indeed, binding every devout Christian throughout the world not in sentiment only, but in the actual interchange of a beneficent activity of which we may not be cognizant, but by which nevertheless we are helped and carried on to perfection."

In fact it might be said that it is the "communion of saints" that gives to the Christian Church that bond of unity and brotherhood that is found in every meeting of Christians for worship. For while all the great religions of the world have their organisations, their priesthoods, and their ritual, it is only in the Christian Church that the holy fellowship of public worship is to any degree recognised. The worship of a Mohammedan in his mosque, or of a Buddhist in his temple, is essentially the worship of each individual—but the worship of any Christian Church is corporate worship, where the sense of fellowship and brotherly love makes each Christian forget himself as an individual and think of himself only as being a sharer in the communion of saints. There is a wide difference between engaging in religious exercises and reading sermons in private, and engaging with one's fellow-worshippers in common acts of prayer and praise. And this fellowship,

this sense of communion with one another as well as with God, that can be as easily felt in the silence of a Quaker meeting as in a magnificent cathedral service, with all its majestic ritual, is what makes the worship of the Church divine. When St. Paul desired the prayers of the Churches in times of great crisis (Eph. vi. 19), he shows how much he valued the fellowship of prayer in the communion of the saints. Throughout all his Epistles, the Apostle lays stress on the peculiar value of corporate or common prayer—prayer in which the whole community joins as a great brotherhood, and such prayer from the first was characteristic of the Church. From the Day of Pentecost onwards the Church gave evidence of its being a communion of saints—an organism, not a collection of worshippers—by its common intercessions, confessions, and thanksgivings, that enter so largely into every act of public worship. And this corporate prayer, in the congregation of the saints, Christ tells us is to be the means of bringing His Divine presence into the midst. "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father, which is in heaven; for where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. xviii. 19, 20).

The simplest requirement, then, to realise the

communion of saints in the worship of the Church is that there should be two or three worshipping souls in fellowship and harmony, seeking to know the will of God. To meet in the name of Christ implies that the bond of union in that assembly is not self-love, but love. It implies that those who so meet are filled with one profound passion of loyalty to Christ and to His law, and of love to one another.

But as the *Westminster Confession of Faith* in the passage above quoted wisely reminds us, the communion of saints, the fellowship of all Christians, must not be thought of as coming to an end with the close of the common worship in the sanctuary, but Christians must carry the same spirit of brotherhood into their everyday life, "relieving each other in outward things, according to their several abilities and necessities." So fully did the Pentecostal Church feel this spirit of brotherhood and communion that they voluntarily relinquished private property and merged all their possessions in a common stock to be used for the common good. "And all that believed were together, and had all things common, and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men as every man had need" (Acts ii. 44, 45). It was in the spirit of Christian brotherhood and to express that sense of new spiritual kinship that

had come to them, and to give evidence of the reality of the communion of the saints, that the Apostolic band thus decided to permit a kind of community life among themselves. Another motive that probably inspired them was the belief which, as we have seen, was widely current in the Apostolic Church that Christ's Second Coming was at hand, when a new world-order would be introduced, and the things of this world would no longer be required. But it should be clearly understood how much at variance is this experiment in the Apostolic Church of having all things in common, from modern Communistic theories that are sometimes erroneously associated with it. Whereas the motive that is behind the creed of the Socialistic Communist is, that material possessions are of such extreme value and importance that they should be divided equally among all, the motive behind the action of the early Christians is almost the opposite of this. They felt that material things mattered so little compared with spiritual, that it was better that their material needs should be supplied from a common stock, that they might be free to pursue after spiritual riches. Besides, the giving up of their possessions was an absolutely voluntary act on the part of each individual Christian. The community as a whole did not demand it, but in the truest sense

it was a freewill offering promoted by love and benevolence. And, of course, the early Christians never dreamt of extending their community life beyond their own numbers, far less of imposing it on the world as a whole. How different is the theory of Socialistic Communism, which would impose its decrees upon all, and enforce them by the terror of brute force, imposing Communism on all whether they wanted it or not! But though the Christian experiment of having all things in common started under almost ideal conditions, it did not long survive. The deceit and dishonesty of human nature and the test of practical economics brought it to a sudden end. For the sin of Ananias and Sapphira, the first recorded instance of the failure of the experiment, lay not in their selling part only of their property and laying it at the Apostles' feet, but in the fact that they lied about it, bringing part of the proceeds only and asserting that it was the whole. But the fact that within a few years the rest of the Church had to make collections for the poor saints that were at Jerusalem, and afford them maintenance (Acts xxiv. 17; 1 Cor. xvi. 1–3), is a reflection of the failure of the experiment on economic grounds. The famine that afflicted Jerusalem about 46 A.D. does not wholly account for the poverty of the Palestinian Church. The fact that the early Christians in

Jerusalem seem to have abandoned in great measure their worldly callings, and to have handed over all their possessions to a common stock which was soon exhausted, while they waited for the Second Coming of Christ, brought economic disaster to the Church in Palestine, which only prompt measures by the Gentile Church were able to relieve. It is significant that the New Testament word for the collection or contribution for the relief of the necessities of their brethren in other congregations of the Church is *κοινωνία* (Rom. xv. 26; 2 Cor. viii. 4, ix. 13; Heb. xiii. 16), and the word is used to signify the fact that the contributions are the outcome of the *κοινωνία* of the saints, and take the place of that community of goods that the Church had already abandoned. In the Pastoral Epistles the necessity of Christian saints giving practical demonstration of their fellowship and communion with their poorer brethren is laid down as an ethical principle. Those who are wealthy must be "ready to distribute, willing to contribute from a sense of fellowship" (*εὐμεταδότους εἶναι, κοινωνικούς*, 1 Tim. vi. 17 f.). Nor was the giving of contributions to be the only means of bearing witness to the reality of the communion of saints, for Christians are reminded—"forget not to show love unto strangers"; "using hospitality one to another

without murmuring" (Heb. xiii. 2; 1 Pet. iv. 9). In all these things they will show the true meaning of that fellowship that is the essence of the Christian Church, and demonstrate their true brotherliness as much as in the experiment of community living in the earliest days of the Church's existence.

5. There is another aspect of the communion of saints yet to be considered. Does the New Testament supply any evidence that the departed have fellowship with the living in the Church, and does the New Testament teach that the departed saints have fellowship also with one another in the life beyond the grave? The consideration of the latter of these two questions will be more appropriately deferred till we come to deal with the last clause of the Creed, "the life everlasting." But as to the former question, the New Testament seems to teach that the fellowship of the saints on earth is not severed by death, and that the living may still have spiritual fellowship with those who have passed from this life. Consider the teaching of St. Paul: "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life . . . shall be able to separate us from the love of God" (Rom. viii. 38); "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands . . . Therefore we are always

confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord" (2 Cor. v. 1 and 6). And that this immortality involves no break in the fellowship of the saints to St. Paul's mind seems the natural conclusion from his statement (Eph. iii. 15), "Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named," where the communion of saints includes the departed. And though the New Testament gives no clear indication of prayer being offered for the departed, yet the evidence of the earliest Christian tombs in the Catacombs of Rome is overwhelming that the primitive Church in the first three centuries made a practice of praying for the souls of those who have fallen asleep. The departed saints were regarded as still in fellowship with the Church on earth, and therefore it was natural that the Church on earth should pray for them. Everywhere in the Catacombs are laconic prayers for the departed, such as these: "Remember, O Lord, Eugenia"; "God refresh thee"; and even among the Catacomb inscriptions the prayers of the departed saints are sometimes asked for the living, so clearly did the Early Church believe that the communion of saints was not severed by death. Samples of such are: "Gratian, one of the faithful, who lived twenty years: ask for us in thy prayers, since we know thee to be in Christ"; "Anatolius,

pray for your sister." It should be noticed that such fellowship with departed saints in prayer is entirely apart from a belief in Purgatory or in an intermediate state after death, for, as we have seen, such beliefs did not emerge till a much later period in the life of the Church. Such prayers for and to the dead, though there are no evidences in the New Testament that can be quoted in their support, were undoubtedly common in the Church, as may be confirmed from the writings especially of the North African Fathers, Cyprian, Tertullian, and Origen. But the communion with departed saints that the Early Church believed in was at any rate a spiritual communion, and though the sense of intimate fellowship with the departed that many experience at the exalted moments of Holy Communion may transcend all our powers of explanation, yet it should not on that account be dismissed as impossible.

And though we should not be tempted to fall into the error of the Roman Church of giving worship to the departed saints that is due to God alone, yet we can realise the true spirit of the communion of saints, by remembering that death does not separate from the fellowship of the departed wise and good in the Church Invisible. Just as 11th November is, by common consent, set apart, as sacred to the memory of those who died

in the Great War, and the memory of the departed on that day seems to bring us into spiritual communion with them, so is it possible for us to realise our fellowship with departed saints whom we never knew in this life, but who are linked to us by a kind of spiritual kinship.

Those who know the reality of the communion of saints in this sense will not be led astray by the extravagant claims of spiritualists to reproduce for us materialisations of the spirits of the departed. Those who know the communion of saints, the reality of entering into true spiritual fellowship with those they have loved and lost, who feel that the departed are as truly in communion with their souls as when they lived on earth, feel no need for material proofs of such communion as spiritualists assert they can give. To those who know the meaning of the communion of saints, the pitiable exhibitions of spiritualists are but the degraded materialism of minds that cannot grasp the meaning of communion of soul with soul. If we make the fellowship of the Christian Church a more real one, if we preach with more conviction our certain beliefs in immortality and in the reality of our communing with the blessed dead, we shall have less reason to deplore the havoc that spiritualism is making of the souls of those who are spiritually weak.

CHAPTER XIII

SIN AND ITS REDEMPTION

"The forgiveness of sins."

THE clause regarding belief in the forgiveness of sins is late in finding a fixed and assured place in the Apostles' Creed. But from the time of Marcellus of Rome, 340 A.D., it is invariably found in the Creeds of the Western Church, and always expressed in the identical terms of the Apostles' Creed. The Eastern Church expresses its belief in "one baptism for the remission of sins," where the Sacrament of Baptism is linked with the doctrine of forgiveness. And so we find it in the Creed of Cyril of Jerusalem, 350 A.D., and in the Creed of Constantinople, 381 A.D., though it did not appear in the earliest form of the Creed of Nicæa. But Western Creeds make no mention of Baptism at all, and in the early credal statements the belief in forgiveness of sins was always expressed in the most general terms. In the catechetical Creed of St. Cyprian of Carthage, 250 A.D., the question is asked, "Dost thou believe

in the forgiveness of sins ? " And in this respect the credal form of the Western Church is in conformity with the earliest credal sermons of the Church in Acts (Acts iii. 26, v. 31, x. 43, xiii. 38), where in each case the Apostles describe the forgiveness of sin as the precious gift of Christ, and do not associate it with Baptism. In all these passages in Acts, Christ is said Himself to have preached the forgiveness of sins. But neither in any of the credal sermons in Acts, nor in any statement of the Apostles' Creed, is there any theological doctrine of the Atonement, nor indeed is forgiveness of sins linked up in any definite way with the death of Christ. The fact of man's sin and his need of obtaining God's forgiveness are simply assumed by the Creed, which goes into no theological questions about the origin of sin and evil nor about theories of the reconciliation of man to God, either to satisfy Divine justice, or to pay a debt due by sinful man to God, or to appease God's anger by a vicarious sacrifice. All this is wanting in the Creed, which simply demands the belief in the fact of God's forgiveness of sins. In this the Apostles' Creed is following as closely as possible the teaching of Christ Himself. It assumes, as He did in His teaching, that there is in man a perverseness that makes him refuse to obey the commands of God. In the teaching of our Lord,

sin is simply badness, unlikeness to God, acting and thinking contrary to the way in which God would act—in other words, sin, to Jesus Christ, is the offending against the laws of love which He taught to be of the very core of God's ethical nature.

To get rid of the sin that is in us, Christ teaches there is only one way, the way of repentance. Each man must undergo the experience of μετάνοια, a change of mind, a personal turning away from evil and loveless ways, and then Christ teaches the sin will be remitted, for repentance brings with it God's forgiveness. But in order to appreciate what God's forgiveness means, we must clearly understand how Christ's view of sin differed from that of His Jewish contemporaries, and survey briefly the growth and development of the Jewish conception of the nature of sin, from the earliest period of Old Testament history up to the time when Christ lived and taught in Galilee and Judæa. Just as in the Old Testament there is preserved for us the record of a gradual revelation of the nature of God, from a very primitive conception of God as a tribal deity up to the moral and righteous, omnipotent and omniscient Lord worshipped by the later prophets, a conception not far short of that of the loving Heavenly Father whom Christ revealed to man, so with regard to

the problems of sin and evil we have in the Old Testament a conspectus of what man has thought on these great themes from the most primitive ideas prevalent at the dawn of Old Testament history right up to the developed doctrines of sin and evil and suffering that we find in the greatest of the prophets. In the Genesis account of the origin of evil in the Garden of Eden (Gen. iii. 1–21) we have an example of man's primitive ideas on this subject. Sin is due to an evil deity, the serpent who by subtle wiles seduces mankind from allegiance to the good God whom he has promised to obey. In the prohibition by Jahve against eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, there was no ethical question involved. It was rather a case of obedience or disobedience to the arbitrary command of the present and all-powerful God of the Garden. God, "for His own good pleasure," to use a Calvinistic phrase, forbade man to eat of the tree. The stage of religious growth here represented would be called by the ethnologist the stage of Totemism, with its system of taboo—certain things must not be touched because God would be offended. But the very fact that the serpent was successful in the Garden in seducing mankind shows that God was not all-powerful. The evil deity, the serpent, could sometimes win in the conflict. And the connection

between sin and punishment and between sin and suffering is also brought out in the Genesis story. Sin brought its inevitable penalty. Death, human work and toil, pain, especially the pain of child-bearing, and misfortune were the direct consequences of man's breaking the arbitrary command of God. This is sin as Milton thinks of it in the opening words of *Paradise Lost*:

> " Of man's first disobedience and the fruit
> Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
> Brought death into the world, and all our woe,
> With loss of Eden, till one greater man
> Restore us and regain that blissful seat,
> Sing, heavenly Muse ! "

The next stage in the development of ideas about sin is seen in Genesis in the account of the origin of sacrifice (Gen. iv. 3–5). Man felt a consciousness of sin. He wanted to appease God's anger and win back His favour, and so he brings an offering to God, sacrifices some of his possessions to placate God, and this sacrifice God arbitrarily refuses or accepts. Such conceptions of sin as these seem to lie behind the sacrifices of Cain and Abel, of Noah and of Abraham. The sense of the arbitrariness in the choice of God, the complete absence of any ethical or moral principle by which God's choice is governed whereby goodness is rewarded and wickedness punished, is evident in the preference shown for the fraudulent Jacob rather

than for the simple but straightforward Esau, and in the dream of Joseph, in the inexplicableness of the favour shown to the butler rather than to the baker (Gen. xl.).

With the revelation of the Decalogue given to Moses on Mount Sinai, we enter upon a new stage of religious history. God is no longer thought of as a local deity, but is the one and only God of the whole world ; and in the Decalogue there is a new stage in the development of the idea of sin. Sin has now a definite moral connotation. The commands of the Decalogue may be classed under three heads : (1) Worship is to be to God alone, as the only God ; (2) details as to ritual that God demands are given, and warnings are given against blaspheming and Sabbath-breaking ; (3) moral commands. Thus, in the Decalogue, sin is described either as (1) neglect to honour God and neglect of religious duties, or (2) neglect of the principles of morality. The whole Levitical legislation in its views on sin is simply an amplification of these principles of the Decalogue. But it develops a far more elaborate moral code, giving sins and their penalties, the priest being the intermediary for God who imposes the penances. Sacrifice has now become an elaborate affair, full of symbolical meaning and governed by strict ritual laws, as in the legislation regarding sin-offerings, thank-offerings, burnt-

offerings, etc. In the Levitical legislation there is a great development in the idea of things considered "taboo." It is now no longer due to the arbitrary will of God that things are pronounced unclean, but in the elaborate lists of things clean and unclean there is now discernible some hygienic, or social or medical, or other reason, as, for example, in the Levitical legislation regarding leprosy, the uncleanness of a dead body, etc. These Levitical laws remained the standard of what was sinful and not sinful right up to our Lord's time. The pious Jew regarded himself as being bound by all of them equally, and in the time of Christ the scribes regarded the Oral Law which had gradually accumulated as a mass of material supplementing and interpreting the Law of Moses, as equally binding on the faithful. But in our Lord's day the Jewish Rabbis held an entirely external and mechanical view of sin, as depending on the performance or omission of certain ritual acts, and many of their ideas regarding cleanness and uncleanness had become quite arbitrary and meaningless. There was no attempt to differentiate the guilt in moral and in ritual offences. To commit adultery or to steal was an offence against God for the Jew in the same category as ritual offences, such as eating rabbit's or swine's flesh.

But though the Law of Moses continued to be the official statement of what was sinful and what was not, the most moral of the prophets found it entirely unsatisfying. In fact the writings of the prophets, Joel, Amos, Hosea, Micah, and Isaiah, are largely writings of revolt against the inadequate ideas of sin in the Levitical Code. The prophets had conceived of sin in an intensely ethical fashion, and more and more the tendency was to regard mere ceremonial observance of ritual laws as useless. The moral ideal of the prophets was obedience to the God of righteousness (cf. Isa. i. 11–18; Mic. vi. 6–8; Joel ii. 13; Hos. vi. 6; Amos v.).

Now when we turn to the Gospel of Christ in its view of the nature of sin, certain very definite facts emerge. (1) Christ does not recognise offences against Jewish ritual and ceremony as sins. On several occasions He pronounces as not sinful the omission of acts of ritual prescribed by the Law, *e.g.* eating with unwashen hands, breaking of the law of the Jewish Sabbath, the neglect of fasting. (2) Mere performance of ritual acts is not sufficient to obtain forgiveness of sins from God. Jesus agrees with the prophet Hosea when he proclaims in God's name, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings" (Hos. vi. 6). But it would be a mistake to suppose that Christ wholly abolished

the ritual prescribed for the restoration of the faithful to the favour of God. The reverse is the case. He punctiliously attended all the Jewish festivals, and when He cleansed the leper He ordered the man so cleansed to show himself to the priest and to offer for his cleansing those things which Moses commanded (Mark i. 44); but, on the other hand, He taught that sin is not to be got rid of by ritual acts. And this attitude was due to His altogether new idea of the nature of sin. To Him sin was not to be explained merely as the dominion of body over spirit, nor is sin inherent in material things. It is essentially a condition of man's inner nature—a wilful and perverse going astray from that which he knows to be good and righteous. "There is nothing from without a man that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they which defile him" (Mark vii. 15). And the list of sins which He gives (Mark vii. 21, 22) shows that He regarded sin as a moral perverseness—"evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, envy, blasphemy, pride, foolishness." Some of these are sins of the body, but others entirely sins of the spirit, and all of them might be described as due to a wilful perverseness.

The Pauline teaching on the nature of sin, as

given in Romans vi. and vii., is substantially the same as that of Christ, though it is expressed in more rabbinic language, and Paul is at pains to correlate the new teaching about the nature of sin to that of the Law of Moses. A misunderstanding of Paul's teaching in Romans vii. 18 and 23 has led to much confusion. He says: "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing"; "But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." A misinterpretation of this teaching has led some to believe that Paul shared the idea of sin as residing in material things—a heresy afterwards taught by Mani, and a heresy which, for a time, led astray St. Augustine. But the error comes from giving a literal meaning to St. Paul's use of "flesh," σάρξ, whereas as we shall see in next chapter σάρξ to St. Paul means human nature—what we would call the "ego."[1] So that Paul does not teach that the body is evil, but rather he teaches, as Christ did, that sin is a wilful perverseness of human nature. To St. Paul, as to His Master, sin is a soul-sickness, and this sickness can be cured, and the soul brought back to health, by a radical change in man's nature, by a whole-hearted repentance assisted by grace sent from God.

[1] Cf. Souter, *Pocket Lexicon to the Greek New Testament.*

When we turn from the Christian evidences of the New Testament as to the dreadful reality of sin, and its universality in men, to modern literature, we find that the tendency in these days is to minimise the potency and dreadfulness of sin. Very prevalent in modern life and literature is the erroneous idea that sin is but an incident of growth, unavoidable and therefore blameless. It is to be looked on as a misfortune, like a disease that involves no fault. This idea runs through the darker and more sinister of the dramas of Henrik Ibsen, and its popularity is largely due to erroneous ideas as to the nature of evolution. This conception arises from the materialistic view that man is but a creature of heredity and environment and therefore not responsible for his actions.[1] Huxley and Haeckel are its philosophical sponsors, and the false teaching has come down even to the professional burglar who lightly explains that he is the creature of heredity and environment, and therefore not to be held responsible for his crimes. Needless to say, such theories find no support in the New Testament. The teaching of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels always strongly emphasises the personal responsibility of each man for his sins, and that each is capable of turning from sin to righteousness. The author of the Fourth Gospel,

[1] Cf. C. Lombroso, *Homo Delinquente*.

it is true, in his desire to preserve the omnipotence of Christ, makes Judas Iscariot to be foreordained by God to commit the crime of the betrayal of His Lord, but such a view is advanced only from a mistaken idea of apologetics. Throughout the teaching of Jesus, sin is a deliberate refusal to follow the commands of God, and these commands are always inspired by the principle of perfect love. The whole teaching of Jesus about the Kingdom of God is a teaching of how to rid the world of sin. In the Sermon on the Mount He lays strong emphasis on the fact that sin does not depend on the acts committed, but on the thoughts and intents of the heart. The evil meditated is as sinful in God's sight as the sinful act committed, and therefore our Lord in that Sermon revises the Law of Moses, to make it conform to this doctrine of the inwardness of sin. The teaching that sin is but an incident of growth, for which man is not responsible, not only finds no sanction from the New Testament, but if pursued to its logical conclusions would mean the extinction of all morality, the annihilation of any distinction between right and wrong, and would make man to be the helpless sport of a cruel and inexorable Fate.

Another common description of the nature of sin given in these modern times is that all sin is simply selfishness. Sir Oliver Lodge says : " The root sin

is selfishness, whereby needless pain and trouble are inflicted on others; when fully developed it involves moral suicide."[1] This theory is not so far from the teaching of Christ as the last we were discussing; for the teaching of Christ on the necessity of self-denial, "Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow Me," clearly shows that selfishness can have no lot nor part in the Christian's life. But Sir Oliver Lodge's definition of all sin as selfishness is not broad enough, and interpreted as he interprets it may easily lead to a false sentimentalism, to the erroneous idea that the highest sinlessness is to refuse to cause "needless trouble and pain." Such is far from the mind of Christ, who taught sternly that it is sometimes necessary to cause pain and trouble. "I am come," He says, "not to send peace on earth, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father" (Matt. x. 34, 35). And sometimes if we are to be true to God, as Christ teaches, we must act in a way that the world would call selfish, and that the world would regard as causing needless pain. "If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple" (Luke xiv. 26). In the ultimate

[1] *The Substance of Faith*, p. 52.

analysis sin becomes a denial of God, and the teaching of Christ is that the Christian must endure to the end in his allegiance to Christ and to righteousness, even though the world may accuse him of selfishness, and therefore of sin, in so doing.

On the great question of sin and its penalties the teaching of Jesus gives clear guidance. In the earliest Old Testament times the prevailing thought was that all suffering, pain, and misfortune in the world are God's direct punishment for sin, and are proportionate to the sinner's guilt. Thus the Deluge is described as a judgment from God sent on the world for its wickedness. Numerous instances of this theory might be cited from the Old Testament—the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah—the plagues of Egypt—the leprosy of Miriam and of Naaman—the madness of Nebuchadnezzar. But, before the close of Old Testament times, pious Hebrews had begun to be disturbed by this theory of the exact connection between sin and suffering. Evil so often went unpunished and virtue was so often made to suffer. "How long shall the wicked triumph," sighs the Psalmist (Ps. xciv. 3); and again, "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree" (Ps. xxxvii. 35). And the problem of the connection between sin and suffering forms the theme of the Book of Job.

Christ's teaching is quite clear and unambiguous. Suffering does not necessarily mean the sin of the victim of the suffering. When told of the Galileans whom Pilate had brutally assassinated, Jesus asks, "Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or these eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke xiii. 2–5).

And again He is asked, "Who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" and He replies, "Neither did this man sin, nor his parents" (John ix. 2, 3). And yet in Jesus' teaching there is a close connection between the suffering that is in the world and the sin that is in the world. The wars, the famines and the pestilences, the woes and misfortunes that He predicted were to come upon the world, were all due to the fact that men refused to receive Him and His truth. If only men would repent and serve God, seeking after the kingdom of heaven, and living according to its laws, a great deal of human misery and suffering would come to an end. Even much of the disease and sickness that are in the world would be done

away. In the healing of disease by Jesus as recorded by the Synoptists the work of healing is almost always prefaced by His pronouncing forgiveness of the individual's sins, showing that in His mind the two were directly connected. Similar teaching is found in the Epistle of St. James, that the great evils in the world are due to sin. " Whence come wars and fightings among you ? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members ? " (James iv. 1).

But the greatest problem of all in connection with sin and suffering is to explain why the suffering so often falls upon the innocent. The mystery of the reason for the suffering of the sinless Son of God upon a criminal's cross on Calvary is profound, and yet this at least is quite clear. It was the sin of men that sent the Son of God to suffer in a shameful death. Never in the history of the world was there a more poignant example of the sinless suffering the penalty for sins that were not His own. And yet Christ in His teaching indicates how the mystery may be solved. He tells us that the way to save the world by redemptive love, will be the way of suffering ; the innocent suffering the penalty for the sins of the guilty will be the one way to rebuke the guilty, turn them from their sins, and bring them to trust with all their hearts in the power of redemptive love.

In addition to this general connection between sin and suffering Christ always teaches that sin is punished directly by God. And in describing the penalty of God for sin, Jesus used the language He found current in the Jewish theology of the day, in its apocalyptic literature, just as we saw He used the phraseology of apocalyptic when speaking of Judgment. His favourite expression for the punishment of sin is "the Gehenna of fire," or "weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth." Just as we saw when dealing with His apocalyptic teaching on His Second Coming and the Judgment He infused a new spiritual meaning into the terms, so when speaking of the penalty of sin He uses apocalyptic expressions in a very different sense from His Jewish contemporaries. They thought of God as a God of wrath, inflicting terrible torment and physical suffering on those who disobeyed Him, whereas, to the Son of Man, the penalty for sin is not at all an act of vengeance and retribution by an offended deity, but rather the penalty, as He conceives it, is the natural and logical outcome of the sin. As each is responsible for his own sin, so each sinner brings on himself the penalty for his sin, and cannot therefore complain of God's injustice. This is the lesson of the parables of the Virgins and the Talents.

In this connection it is interesting to notice how

different is the teaching of Jesus from the teaching of the Law of Moses on the question of inherited penalty for sin. The Decalogue taught that the guilt for the sins of the fathers descended upon the children to the third and fourth generation, and many instances might be quoted from the Old Testament to show how the children were punished for their father's guilt. But even in the teaching of the prophets there was a revolt against the injustice of such teaching, and both Jeremiah xxxi. 29 and Ezekiel xviii. 2 quote the saying that it shall no more be "that the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." Individual responsibility for individual sin is the doctrine taught by these prophets. Christ in His teaching likewise maintains that guilt cannot be inherited, but every one is responsible for his own sins (cf. John ix. 2).

And even in those passages of the Epistle to the Romans where St. Paul states his doctrine of original sin, he always maintains that sin is a personal matter; and St. Paul agrees with the teaching of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels that apart from personal conscious and voluntary transgression there can be no sin (Rom. v. 13, "For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law"; Rom. iv. 15, "Where no law is, there is no transgression").

Now as we have seen, in our Lord's teaching as in that of St. Paul, personal sin involves penalty, but that penalty is not to be thought of in the legal meaning given to the word in the law courts. According to human law, when a person is found guilty of a transgression, automatically there comes into operation the law code of his country prescribing an appropriate penalty, and sentence accordingly is pronounced by the judge. But, according to Christ's teaching, there is no such statute book kept by God, in which are recorded the various penalties for various sins. But although Christ by His teaching in the Sermon on the Mount showed for all time the inadequacy of the Old Testament plan of cataloguing sins and attaching to them appropriate penalties, yet the Roman Catholic Church, with its system of casuistry and moral theology and codified penalties for every kind of offence, still tries to convert the will of a loving and forgiving God to a fixed and mechanical code of established laws. But, as Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount, God has no such code of penalties. As the guilt for a sin is strictly personal and inward, so also the penalty is strictly personal, and no general rules can be laid down regarding it. The penalty follows the sin as a consequence, whether that sin has been committed as an act or only meditated. Covetousness, for

example, brings its own penalty. Is not this the meaning of the parable of the man who would pull down his barns and build greater, who is told by God, "Thou fool! This night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall these things be, that thou hast provided?" (Luke xii. 20). So also St. Paul teaches that the principle of retribution always works in the long-run: "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. vi. 23); "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. vi. 7).

A most important point to be decided when dealing with Christ's teaching about sin and its penalties, and about forgiveness, is this: Does He teach that some sins merit and receive everlasting punishment? Is the possibility of repentance and obtaining forgiveness ever ruled out? There are statements in the Synoptic Gospels which seem to imply that there were penalties for sin that were eternal, and never could come to an end. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment"; or "They shall be cast into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark ix. 44, 45). But here again the language is that of Jewish apocalyptic, which received a totally new meaning from Christ. "Everlasting punishment" became to all intents and purposes a new conception when used by our Lord. Its meaning

seems to be not a penalty laid upon a transgressor by an angry God, but rather the meaning is that the man who had consciously sinned and transgressed shall continue to bear the penalty that that sin brings with it until he repents. And if he delay his repentance till the end of time, then, to the end of time, will the burden of the penalty be his. There is one saying of our Lord that causes much concern to some people, in this connection. "Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation" (Mark iii. 28, 29). Here a false literalism will be disastrous exegesis. The true meaning of Jesus seems to be that a constant deliberate and long-continued preference of darkness to light—which seems to be what is meant by blaspheming against the Holy Ghost—had as its consequence the making repentance to be impossible, and as it seemed likely that this perverseness would continue to the end, so of course "everlasting punishment" must be theirs who had not repented of their sin. The same teaching is found in Hebrews vi. 4–6 and xii. 17. It is the unrepentant attitude of the sinner that excludes forgiveness and not any harsh decree of an unforgiving God. For, as Dr.

Orchard says: "God has not completed His work with a man when, through the breach of some natural or moral law, punishment, sharp and bitter, descends upon him, not even though the man agrees to condemn himself, but only when the truth is accepted and enthroned in his heart. And all this mighty universe and all this strange ordeal of life, and all the pressure and pleading of spiritual forces, are slowly but surely making for this end." The will of God is that all should repent. He is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. iii. 9), and His will surely is that even those who have been guilty of blaspheming against the Holy Spirit should also come to repentance and be forgiven.

But it must not be supposed that God's forgiveness of a sinner is contingent upon his repentance, or comes into play only when a sinner repents. God's forgiveness is there all the time, whether the sinner has repented or not. For example, in the midst of the agony of the Cross, Christ could pray for His cruel and unrepentant enemies and persecutors, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And constantly does He reiterate both in His parables and in His dealing with sinners, that God's forgiveness is there all the time, even before the sinner's repentance.

When He announces to several of those brought to Him for healing, "Thy sins are forgiven thee," He is not proclaiming a new edict of pardon from God for the particular case, but only enunciating the great truth that the loving God is always forgiving, always gracious, always merciful and pardoning. But the faith in Christ of those who came to be healed has opened their hearts, and made them able to repent and turn from their sins, and to appreciate the forgiveness of God.

But it may be asked, "If God's forgiveness be always there, what is the need of repentance at all?" It is just to answer that question that Christ devoted much of His teaching. In the parable of the Prodigal Son, for example, the father had forgiven his son all the time, long before the son came to himself and repented; but it was only when the son repented that he could appropriate the blessing of the father's forgiveness. Without repentance, we cannot know the goodness and graciousness of God, nor make our own that forgiveness which He is always ready to bestow.

But the words of the Apostles' Creed imply more than belief in the forgiveness of God. The "forgiveness of sins" also means that we must believe in forgiving one another—that is to say, in our dealings with one another, we must be as infinitely forgiving of those who injure us as God is to us

impenitent sinners. As Christ, when we were yet sinners, died for us, so must we be ready to show our love for those who injure us, by forgiving as Jesus did. For the world's way of combating evil by methods of force and intimidation, by codes of laws and penalties and demonstrations of superior strength, Christ has no word of approval, but rather He tells us that all these methods will fail at the last to stamp out evil from the world. He will never consent to the doctrine that evil may be done in the hope that greater evil may thereby be cured. When the woman taken in adultery, in the very act, is brought before Him for judgment, and His critics breathlessly wait to see what sentence He will pronounce, He stoops down and writes with His finger in the sand, and the only condemnation He utters is, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" (John viii. 7). And again He asks, "How can Satan cast out Satan? If Satan rise up against himself and be divided, he cannot stand, but must have an end" (Mark iii. 23, 26). And He constantly teaches that not by the world's way of returning evil for evil will sin be stamped out, but only by God's way of returning good for evil. A great part of the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount is devoted to an exposition of Christ's way of combating sin and evil by His method of love and forgiveness. "Agree

with thine adversary quickly." "Resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." "And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain." "Love your enemies; bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you." All this implies that the one way to overcome sin is to treat it, as God does, with love and forgiveness. Nor are we to wait for the penitence of those who injure us, before we forgive. Our forgiveness must be there all the time, but he who has sinned against us will only be able to understand and appreciate our forgiveness and love when he has repented.

And further, Christ teaches that we are able to understand and appreciate God's forgiveness of our sins only in so far as we show the same forgiving spirit, as God does, to those who injure us. "Forgive us our trespasses, *as* we forgive them that trespass against us. For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses." This teaching of Christ on forgiveness means that we must act and think with

regard to our enemies, and those who have sinned against us, as God does to us. And this implies a most revolutionary change in all our ethical standards. It means the abolition of all thoughts of reprisal, retaliation, or vengeance against those who injure us—and the abandonment of all human institutions built up on the principle of retaliation. If we are to obey the ethic which Christ lays down, and which the Apostles' Creed teaches as an article of faith, we must believe in the abolition of war and strife, and in sweeping changes in our penal system banishing from all punishment the element of retaliation. It means far-reaching reforms in our ideas of civil law, for the adversaries in a lawsuit are no longer to be regarded as hating one another, but rather as loving and ready to forgive one another. It means the reorganisation of industry on an altogether new basis, a replacing of mutual distrust and suspicion between employer and workman by mutual trust, respect, and love. It means a putting into practice in industry as elsewhere of the Golden Rule, "Do unto others, as ye would that others should do unto you."

That these things lie at the very core of Christ's teaching, and that the forgiveness of sins as thus understood is the essence of the Christian's ethic, has always been more clearly recognised by the poets than by the theologians. William Blake,

for example, recognises only one religion for dwellers on this earth, the religion of the continual forgiveness of sins. To the poet, this is "the Religion of Jesus"—the most ancient, the eternal and everlasting Gospel, and he sums up what that Gospel means in the lines which seem to express most tersely the meaning of the words, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins":

> "Jesus was sitting in Moses' chair,
> They brought the trembling woman there;
> Moses commands she be stoned to death,
> What was the sound of Jesus' breath?
> He laid His hand on Moses' law;
> The ancient heavens, in silent awe,
> Writ with curses from Pole to Pole,
> All away began to roll."

CHAPTER XIV

THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

"The resurrection of the body."

LIKE the other clauses at the end of the Apostles' Creed, these words, "the resurrection of the body," are an addition made during the fourth century, first appearing in the Western Creed in the Symbol of Marcellus of Rome, 340 A.D., in the form *σαρκὸς ἀνάστασιν*, and in the later Latin Creeds as "carnis resurrectionem." At an earlier period of the Church's history Tertullian, in his "Rule of Faith," *circa* 200 A.D., had expressed belief in "the resurrection of the flesh," as had also St. Irenæus in his writings dating about twenty years earlier. There is no mention of the resurrection of the body in the Creed of Nicæa, but in the Eastern Church the words *ἀνάστασιν σαρκὸς* first appear in the Creed of Jerusalem, 348 A.D., and in the writings of St. Cyril of Jerusalem. In the Creed of Constantinople, 381 A.D., the words of this clause in the Eastern Symbol are changed to *προσδοκοῦμεν*

ἀνάστασιν νεκρῶν indicating that the word *σάρξ* in this connection had caused some difficulty to the theologians of Byzantium.

It should be noticed that, with this exception, it is the resurrection of the *flesh*, *σαρκὸς*, that is spoken of in the Creeds—not the resurrection of the body, *σωματὸς*. The mistranslation "resurrection of the body" in the English Version is due probably to the same cause that produced the change above noted in the Symbol of Constantinople—namely, a desire to tone down the supposed harshness of the words "resurrection of the flesh," as it appeared to those who did not know what the *ἀνάστασις σαρκὸς* really meant.

Most writers on the Creed, and especially Harnack and Swete, have made much of the fact that the phrase *ἀνάστασις σαρκὸς* is not once found in the New Testament. The usual New Testament phrasing when speaking of the survival of the dead after death is *ἀνάστασις τῶν νεκρῶν*, and that is the phrase constantly employed in the writings of St. Matthew, St. Luke, St. Paul, and by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. As both Harnack and Swete point out, the words "resurrection of the flesh," interpreted literally, are contradicted by the teaching both of St. Paul and St. John. St. Paul, in 1 Corinthians xv. 50,

writes, " Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God," and the Apostle plainly teaches that the resurrection-body is not the body of flesh and blood. So also St. John in his Gospel (vi. 63) represents Christ as having said, " It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing." For these reasons Harnack concludes " that in her conception of the resurrection and the life everlasting as the ' resurrection of the flesh ' the post-Apostolic Church overstepped the line commonly observed in the oldest preaching." Now while this statement of Harnack's is perfectly true of some of the Apostolic Fathers, it is untrue to generalise and say that it was physical resurrection in bodies of flesh and blood that was in the minds of those who added this clause to the Apostles' Creed in the fourth century. In the second Christian century, the Docetic heresy which denied the real physical being of Christ was causing great trouble to the Church, and in their polemical zeal against Doceticism some of the Apostolic Fathers seem to have taught that at the resurrection the dead will again enter into the bodies of flesh and blood that their souls formerly inhabited. St. Ignatius, at any rate, plainly asserts that the post-Resurrection body of Christ was a body of flesh and blood, and hence he infers that men too will be raised up in bodies of fleshly tissue, identical

physiologically with their bodies, when they lived on earth. He says: "I know and believe that even after the Resurrection He was in the flesh . . . the Resurrection was like the Passion in the flesh as well as in the spirit." The Docetic heresy went so far as to affirm that since it is only man's spirit that matters, the body is quite unimportant. And so long as a man has Christ's spirit in him, he may allow all the passions and impulses of the body full play; and therefore the Docetic heresy tended to promote licentiousness in practice, and so the Church felt that this grievous error must be combated. So we have the Epistle of Pseudo-Clement (quoted by Swete, *The Apostles' Creed*, p. 94) stating: "Let none of you say that this flesh is not judged nor rises again. Consider: wherein were ye saved? . . . Was it not in this flesh? We ought then to guard the flesh as a temple of God: for as in the flesh ye were called, in the flesh ye shall also come." So strenuously did the Church combat Doceticism that, as we have seen, in some of the Fathers at least, it led to an entirely material and physical view of the resurrection of the dead. The difficulty caused to the Church by this material view of the resurrection of the flesh was almost as great as the difficulty caused by the Docetic error it set out to combat. Tertullian, in his treatise *De Resurrectione Carnis*,

tries to harmonise the conflicting views of St. Paul and St. Ignatius. Tertullian points out that St. Paul does not say, "the flesh shall not rise," but that it shall not enter the Kingdom till a change has passed over it. But Tertullian becomes crudely materialistic in his view of the resurrection, as when he says, "Resurgit igitur caro, et quidem omnis, et quidem ipsa, et quidem integra." Thus the false teaching that originated in a misdirected Christian apologetic resulted, as Origen tells us, in some otherwise excellent Christians imagining that the identical bones and flesh and blood which were buried would be raised again, and the existing form of the human body be reproduced, the hands and feet and other members returning to their old functions—a false conception that unfortunately still persists in the thought of the popular mind on the resurrection.

But Origen's sane interpretation of the doctrine of St. Paul, namely, that σάρξ means the human personality, and ἀνάστασις σαρκὸς means the survival of personality, did not meet with universal approval in his own day, though, to my mind, Origen's interpretation was the conception of those who inserted the words in the Creed. But St. Jerome, for example, believes in the crudely material conception of a physical resurrection,

and quotes the words of the Roman Creed, "resurrectionem carnis," in support of his views.

Rufinus, who shared Jerome's views, made the doctrine of the Apostles' Creed more materialistic by inserting the word "huius"—"resurrectionem huius carnis." But the elimination of the word "huius" in all later forms of the Creed shows that, from the fourth century on, the Early Church adopted Origen's view and took the words to mean the resurrection of personality. Now the question is, Whether is this interpretation of the words ἀνάστασις σαρκὸς, or the physical interpretation, in accordance with the teaching of Christ?

Our Lord gives a very distinct and definite teaching as to the resurrection life. Take, for example, the occasion when He was questioned by the Sadducees as to the problem of the woman who had married seven brothers, and consider His answer to their query as to whose wife she would be in the resurrection life. "Ye do err," he says, "not knowing the Scriptures or the power of God." Then quoting the Old Testament Law, Exodus iii. 16, He continues, "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living," and interprets these words to mean that even in the Old Testament Scriptures there was implicit a belief in a survival after death. Then He goes on to say, "In the resurrection they

neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven." What do these words mean? It seems to me that they clearly teach that in the resurrection life there will be nothing physical, and therefore true marriage will be impossible. There will be survival, but it will be of personality only, for as St. Paul teaches, 1 Corinthians xv. 50–53, "Corruption cannot inherit incorruption"; "But this corruption must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." So also Christ says, Luke xx. 35, 36, "But they that shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, cannot die any more, for they are equal to the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection." Clearly what is implied here is a survival of the true Ego, of the personality set free from the bonds of the flesh. And although we read that at the Crucifixion of Christ, according to St. Matthew xxvii. 52, 53, "The graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints arose, and came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many," I do not think we are justified in interpreting this to mean a physical event. I cannot think that what took place was the gathering together of material particles from earth and ocean and air, and the apportioning of

them among rival claimants. Such an idea is alien to all Christ's teaching. But I think the words are to be interpreted symbolically—that is, that visions of the true meaning of the teaching of the saints were given to many at Jerusalem, when the appalling tragedy of the Crucifixion had dawned upon them. And the evangelist of St. Matthew's Gospel (the only Gospel in which the miracle is mentioned) misinterpreted the tradition and described an actual rising of physical bodies from the graves, in the language familiar to him from the Jewish apocalyptic books, and especially from the "Secrets of Enoch."

In the Book of Enoch li. 1–5 we read, "And in those days will the earth also give back those who are treasured up in it, and Sheol also will give back that which it has received, and Hell will give back that which it owes." It is the influence of such a passage that sufficiently accounts for St. Matthew's narrative of the graves being opened at the Crucifixion of our Lord. If there had been an actual opening of the graves, and an actual appearing of people long dead in the streets of Jerusalem, it is impossible that so strange an event would have been passed over in silence by the other evangelists and by all the ancient historians, including Josephus.

The Pauline teaching of the resurrection of the

dead is equally definitely in favour of the conception of the survival of personality and not of the " flesh " in the material sense. That teaching is most clearly given in 1 Corinthians xv. 35–38, " But some man will say, ' How are the dead raised up ? And with what body do they come ? ' Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die : and that which thou sowest, thou sowest *not* the body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain. But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed His own body." This surely implies that as the seed of the wheat disintegrates, so our body of flesh and blood decomposes, and after death a new and glorious entity is brought forth—a " spiritual body "—not subject to corruption, but, as we would say in modern terminology, the personality of the man survives in a condition suitable to its new environment in the spirit world. The personality retains all the characteristics it had on earth, except those that are material. We retain our individual identity in the resurrection life, and each soul in the spirit world is distinct from every other. Modern philosophy is more and more coming to see the reasonableness of the Pauline conception. The study of personality made by Dr. Ward, for example, has exploded the old objection to this

idea that personality is inconceivable apart from the physical body. If that were true, then we would be unable to speak of the personality of God the Father, or pray to Him, as Our Father, for the personality of the Father has never been incarnate in physical form. The resurrection of personality after death is the one conception that makes this short life of ours on earth conceivable as consistent with the will of a beneficent God.

The question next emerges, Is this Pauline conception of the survival of human personality the same thing as is expressed in the Creed as "the resurrection of the flesh"? A study of the New Testament usage of the word σάρξ will enable us to supply an affirmative answer. The word σάρξ is frequently used to denote human personality, as in the common phrase πᾶσα σάρξ = all human persons (Matt. xxiv. 22; Mark xiii. 20; 1 Pet. i. 24). St. Paul clearly gives this definition of the word as equivalent to the Ego in Romans vii. 15, "In me, that is in my flesh (τουτ' ἔστιν ἐν τῇ σάρκι μοῦ) . . ." so when he speaks of "fleshly wisdom" (2 Cor. i. 12) the meaning obviously is "human wisdom." The same interpretation of the word is to be given in 1 Corinthians iii. 1; Hebrews vii. 16; Romans xv. 27. So also in our Lord's use of the word in Matthew

xxiv. 22, "human personality" is the only adequate rendering. Therefore it seems to me that we need have no hesitation in accepting Origen's interpretation of the "resurrection of the flesh," as being non-physical, and denoting the survival of human personality, because it is in accord with the teaching of Christ in the Synoptic Gospels as well as in accord with the teaching of St. Paul.

The next question that emerges is, When does this resurrection of the dead, this resurrection of human personality take place? Three distinct views have been held on the matter.

1. St. Paul in his early Epistles, *e.g.* in 1 and 2 Thessalonians, believes that the resurrection of the dead would take place at the speedy Second Coming of Christ in power. So also in 1 Corinthians xv. 51, 52 he teaches that the resurrection of the dead is to coincide with Christ's Coming: "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." Cf. also 1 Corinthians xv. 23.

But, as we have seen in Chapter IX., the Church before the end of the first century had abandoned the belief in the immediacy of Christ's Second

Coming, and so we find Revelation xx. 4–6 looking for the resurrection of the dead after Satan has reigned for a thousand years. As we have seen reason to abandon the idea of Christ's Second Coming as a definite day, so the thought of the resurrection of the dead taking place on that day must be abandoned also.

2. The Reformers, bewildered apparently by the inconsistency of the Scriptural teaching as to the time of the resurrection of the dead, taught generally that, immediately after death, the soul is separated from the body, the souls of the righteous passing immediately into glory as disembodied spirits, and the souls of the wicked similarly as disembodied spirits suffer the torments of hell. At the end of the world the souls both of the just and the unjust will return to their bodies. As the *Westminster Confession of Faith* describes the doctrine (ch. xxxii. pars. 1, 2):

> "The bodies of men after death return to dust, and see corruption, but their souls (which neither die nor sleep) having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them. The souls of the righteous, being then made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies;

> and the souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day. Besides these two places for souls separated from their bodies, the Scripture acknowledgeth none. At the last day, such as are found alive shall not die, but be changed: and all the dead shall be raised up with the self-same bodies, and none other, although with different qualities, which shall be united again to their souls for ever."

Now, of course, this theory is incompatible with the view that the resurrection of the dead means the resurrection of personality, for which we have been contending, and is due to a misinterpretation of the New Testament passages we have quoted. And not only are the Christian evidences, when properly understood, against this doctrine of Calvinistic theology, but it is quite unable to be co-ordinated with the rest of Christian doctrine, as understood in modern times. The teaching of the *Westminster Confession* on this subject demands an entirely material view of heaven and hell which has long been given up by theologians. Besides, there are as great difficulties in the idea of disembodied spirits enjoying God's glory and then after æons of time returning to their mortal bodies at the Resurrection Day, as there are in the belief

in Purgatory, when we consider these things from the philosophical point of view.

3. The modern view accepted by most theologians is that the complete personality of man immediately after death rises as a spiritual body and so survives. Thus the resurrection of the dead is a process continually going on, and ensues immediately after death, nor is there any period of existence as a disembodied spirit. This view of the resurrection of the dead is the only one that agrees with Christ's teaching, as when He said, " To-day wilt thou be with Me in Paradise," or as He taught in the parable of Dives and Lazarus. St. Paul also teaches the same doctrine of an immediate passage after death to the resurrection life in 2 Corinthians v. 2–4. Now this conception is one which is tenable by modern scientists and philosophers, and in fact is rapidly coming within the domain of scientific proof, whereas the other conception of the resurrection of flesh and blood is impossible of belief by either the science or philosophy of to-day. From the side of science, no one has given more unremitting study to the problem of death and the survival after death than the veteran French astronomer Camille Flammarion, and in his great work *Death and its Mystery*, in three volumes, he has brought together the fruits of a lifetime's patient research. It is impossible

here to go into all the proofs for the survival of human personality which he adduces; his conclusions, however, we may quote. "Human bodies brought to life again! The idea is, in itself, indefensible. Life beyond the grave is spent under conditions altogether different from those of earthly life. There can be no assimilation of food. What would organisms made like ours be good for? It is a state without any connection with the vital needs of human beings on our planet" (*After Death*, p. 382).

But the result of all Flammarion's researches is to leave him firmly convinced of the reality of the resurrection of human personality, as we have tried to expound it. "There is no break between this life and the next. There is continuity. Our personalities survive, though there is a considerable difference between the two states of existence. Material possessions no longer exist: physical suffering and infirmities are done away" (*After Death*, p. 350). And Flammarion's final conclusion, based entirely on scientific evidence, is a triumphant vindication of the Christian Faith. "We may be certain—and our certainty is based on scientific proofs, that the soul survives after the last earthly breath has been drawn. . . . However far future discoveries may carry us, the doctrines which we have acquired may henceforth

be summed up in these words: The body dies. The soul lives on in the infinite and the eternal" (*After Death*, p. 393).

Thus the most recent scientific discovery and research confirm entirely the words of the Creed, "I believe in the resurrection of the flesh," as expounded in the preceding pages.

CHAPTER XV

THE FUTURE LIFE

"And the life everlasting."

THE last clause in the Apostles' Creed, the belief in the life everlasting, like the other clauses at the end of the Symbol, was not regularly incorporated into the Creed till the beginning of the fifth century. About 400 A.D. it is found in the Creed of Niceta and in the Creed of Augustine, and occurs in all the later forms of the Western Creed. The words do not seem to have entered into the old Roman Symbol, as they are absent from the Creed of Rufinus, and though they occur in the Creed of Marcellus as quoted by Epiphanius, Dr. Burn thinks the words to be an addition by Epiphanius himself. In the Eastern Church, the clause relating to the life to come is also late in making its appearance, being found first in the Creed of Cyril of Jerusalem, 348 A.D., whence they were incorporated in slightly altered form into the later recension of the Nicene Symbol, known as the Creed of Constantinople, 381 A.D. But a

belief in the life to come enters into credal statements of a much earlier date, for example, in the writings of Irenæus, *circa* 180 A.D., and the Creed of Cyprian of Carthage, *circa* 255 A.D., concludes with the words, "et Vitam æternam per Sanctam Ecclesiam." It is a matter of dispute how this clause was introduced into the Apostles' Creed. Some, *e.g.* Lumby (*History of the Creeds*, p. 126), argue that it was introduced by Marcellus, who was an exile in Rome from the Church of the East. But whether the introduction of the clause was due to Marcellus or not, there is but little doubt that it was from the East that the clause made its way into the Symbol of the West.

But although it was so late in being embodied in the Creeds the belief in the life everlasting was from the very beginning an essential part of the Church's faith. Such a belief is, of course, strongly emphasised throughout the New Testament. In the Fourth Gospel there is a much more developed account of the meaning and the nature of eternal life than anywhere else in the Scriptures. The author of the Fourth Gospel seems to have discovered the truth that Jesus taught that here and now we may have eternal life by obedience to Christ, and that those who enter into true communion with God can look upon the grave and death with complacence because they are assured,

like St. Paul, that "neither life, nor death, nor things present, nor things to come, will be able to separate them from the love of God in Jesus Christ." For example, such a passage as John v. 25, 26 is quite definite in its teaching. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself." Such a passage is surely not to be interpreted in a mere physical sense, but is to be taken along with the rest of the Johannine teaching, as being an account given in the Oriental manner of the great spiritual renovation that was to come to the world under the power of His truth. The same teaching is found in John iii. 16, "That every one who believeth on Him may not perish, but have everlasting life." Thus to the author of the Fourth Gospel "everlasting life" is the phrase used to denote the state of those who are saved, through their belief in Christ, as distinguished from the unsaved, and this evangelist sometimes describes "everlasting life" as a present possession of Christians, at other times as a hope for the future beyond the grave. Thus St. John gives it, as our Lord's teaching, that there is to be a survival of personality beyond the grave for all who

believe in Christ. And this leads us to ask, What is the state of the unsaved in the Johannine teaching? Does the evangelist imply that there will be no future life for those who do not believe? There are some passages in the Fourth Gospel that seem to teach destruction or annihilation as the fate of the unsaved. In addition to those quoted above, Christ says (John xv. 6), "If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." But, in other passages in John's Gospel, Christ seems to teach the opposite doctrine of the ultimate salvability of all men in the future life. For example (John xii. 32), Christ says, "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." The difficulty of these apparent inconsistencies as to the possibility of everlasting life for all men, will be cleared up by a study of the account of the raising of Lazarus as it is contained in St. John's Gospel, chapter xi. Since that story illustrates both Christ's true teaching on the subject of the future life, and in the attitude of Martha and Mary reveals the common point of view of many to-day, it is worth while going into the meaning of Christ's teaching there given more in detail. The story abounds with difficulties, and the difficulties are not only connected with the physical miracle, with

the bringing back into life one who had been four days dead and whose body had already begun to decompose. There is the still greater difficulty of the fact that absolutely nothing is known of the subsequent life of Lazarus on earth. And it is curious indeed that the compilers of the Gospels and the author of the Acts of the Apostles should be entirely silent concerning the testimony of one whose witness would have been invaluable to the Church in an age when so much stress was laid on physical miracles. But an even greater difficulty lies in the conduct of Christ. We can hardly conceive it to be possible that that Jesus who loved Mary and Martha her sister, when He heard Lazarus was sick, would refuse to yield to their entreaties to come, unless He had some great purpose behind His refusal, something more than a desire to be melodramatic and work a well-staged miracle. Now it seems to me that such a great purpose was in our Lord's mind, though the author of the Fourth Gospel failed completely to understand it. Christ's great desire was to lift the minds of Martha and Mary up out of their materialistic plane of ideas, convince them that the raising and preserving of the material body was not what mattered most, but what was of infinite importance was the gaining of " eternal life " through entering into communion with God

through Christ. He wanted to open the minds of the sorrowing sisters of Bethany to the firm conviction that their brother was still alive in the presence of God. But when Jesus said to Martha, "Thy brother shall rise again," she replied, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day," showing that she believed in the Pharisaic teaching of the coming of the Day of Judgment, and in a general resurrection then. And when the two sisters upbraided Christ saying, "If thou hadst been here, our brother had not died," they showed they had no real belief in an after-life at all, except a resurrection of the dead for judgment at the Last Day. And what they wanted Jesus to do was to restore the physical body of their brother. They had no conception of the meaning of the life everlasting, as our Lord had been teaching it to them. And so He teaches them the same great truth about what real immortality is in the ever-memorable words, "I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." The great truth that Christ would have them believe is, that the real resurrection life is the life lived in communion with God, both on this side of the grave and beyond it; over those who live in such communion, death can

have no dominion. Death is only an incident in the eternal life of the soul, a gateway of release through which souls in communion with God pass to God's nearer presence and to a richer and fuller life beyond. That was obviously the lesson Christ meant to teach in the Lazarus incident. The miracle He meant to work primarily was the spiritual miracle in the hearts of Martha and Mary. And the thanksgiving of Jesus to God (John xi. 41–42) is a thanksgiving for the opening of the eyes of the two sisters to this great truth. But the evangelist seems to have misunderstood the purport, and he records in verse 44 the miracle of a physical resurrection as if that were the main purpose of our Lord, and not the spiritual teaching. But a close reading of Jesus' teaching reveals that the lesson that Jesus wanted to drive home was that it is not the physical that matters, but the spiritual.

And the same materialistic views that darkened the minds of Martha and Mary are responsible for the most remarkable of the false teachings of to-day concerning the life to come, namely, the teachings of spiritualism. The difficulty about a belief in spiritualism from the Christian point of view is, not that there is any inherent impossibility in believing that the veil that separates this world from the next may yet be pierced, but rather this

is the difficulty, that all the writings of the spiritualists show that their ideas are of the earth, earthy. What they long for is just what Martha and Mary of Bethany yearned for, when their brother died. They want to see the dead brought back to them in material form. They want to feel the "touch of a vanished hand," and to hear "the sound of a voice that is still." They strain every effort to get what they call materialisations of the departed, as if the material form were the thing that mattered most. They want to receive messages from those who have passed "to that bourne from which no traveller ever returneth," and it does not seem to matter how trivial and childish the messages received may be. What strikes one most when reading such a book as Sir Oliver Lodge's *Raymond*, for example, is the trifling and utterly uninteresting nature of the messages received, and the cumbrous ways by which the dead have chosen to communicate.

Materialism lies at the root of all the claims of the spiritualists. What they want to get is something physical; communion of soul with soul is not sufficient for them. Now, if we believe Christ's teaching in the Fourth Gospel about the life beyond as a life of communion with God, with which death cannot interfere, for example, as it is expressed in the words, "I am the Resurrection

and the Life," etc., how utterly unimportant become all these things on which the spiritualists lay so much stress. They seem to miss the point of Christ's teaching, which is, that communion with the departed is possible here and now to those who seek to live in daily communion with God. For just as the devout Christian has experience of the Real Spiritual Presence of Christ at the Sacrament of Holy Communion—not in the elements themselves as a materialisation of His Body and Blood, as the Roman Catholics are taught to believe, but in the communion of His Spirit with ours—so also the pure in heart who have become heirs of eternal life feel and know that death does not separate them from their departed friends, and they can enter into real communion with their beloved dead now, as spirit with spirit, and they feel no need for any material manifestation whatever.

Now, if our interpretation of Christ's teaching about the life everlasting in the Fourth Gospel be true, namely, that life eternal is conceived to be that privilege of the redeemed whereby they live even beyond the grave in constant communion with God, it follows that the real meaning of Christ's teaching as to the future of the unredeemed is, that they shall be bereft of such communion with God in the future life, and this idea Christ expresses by the use of such figures of speech as

"perishing," "being cast into the fire," "being burned," etc. The loss which the unredeemed will suffer in the life to come may best be expressed by these metaphors, but the words were never meant by our Lord to mean the annihilation or total extinction of the wicked at death, as some have literally interpreted them. And a study philologically of these figures of speech bears out this contention. The word used for "perish" to describe the fate of the unredeemed in John iii. 15, 16 is clearly used to describe the fate of the wicked as alienated from God in John vi. 39: "And this is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." Cf. John xviii. 9. So also when Jesus speaks of "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" in the Synoptic Gospels (Matt. x. 6, xv. 24), or when He says, "He was come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke xix. 10), though the word for "lost" is the same word, ἀπολλύσθαι, it clearly means, as in the Fourth Gospel, alienation from God and spiritual destitution.

In the Synoptic Gospels the fate of the wicked is almost invariably described by our Lord not as annihilation at death, but as continued existence in the state of being lost, continued alienation from God, and this is sometimes described by the

apocalyptic imagery of "fire unquenchable," "Gehenna," and sometimes as "age-long punishment." Christ clearly teaches in the Synoptic Gospels that there is to be an everlasting life for the unredeemed as for the righteous, but there will also be a continued existence of alienation from God which, as we have seen in a previous chapter, is the true interpretation of Christ's apocalyptic language. The fact that Jesus taught there was to be a life everlasting for the wicked, and that annihilation was not to be their punishment, is amply confirmed by many of the sayings of our Lord recorded in the Synoptic Gospels. In Matthew xii. 32 Jesus says, "Whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come." This surely implies survival after death, even for those who have been guilty of the most heinous of sins. So also Judas Iscariot is described as "going to his own place" after death (Acts i. 25). Therefore we are bound to conclude, both from the evidence of the Fourth Gospel and from the Synoptics, that Christ taught that there was an everlasting existence beyond the grave for even the most wicked, and that all theories of conditional immortality are based on a misinterpretation of Christ's apocalyptic language.

The essential features of the Pauline teaching

on the life everlasting have been mentioned in the previous chapter. The Apostle believes, as we have seen, in the survival of personality, and regards the soul as possessing a continuous existence after death, and death to St. Paul, as to all the New Testament writers, is intimately bound up with sin. As Dr. H. A. A. Kennedy says (*St. Paul's Conceptions of the Last Things*, p. 113): "For Paul, death is one indivisible experience. It is the correlative of sin. Like all the Biblical writers, he never distinguishes between 'Moral' (or 'Spiritual') and 'physical.'" But to St. Paul, as to all the other New Testament writers, life everlasting is the inheritance of all human spirits, and the nature of that life beyond the grave has been made known to us, and assured to us (1) by Christ's Resurrection, and (2) by His teaching on the subject. Cf. Phil. i. 19–25; 2 Cor. v. 1–9; 2 Tim. i. 10.

The next question that emerges is, Do the Christian evidences of the New Testament give us any indication of the nature of the life beyond the grave? Though this is a question on which the New Testament gives very little direct information, yet certain things are necessarily implied in thinking of the life everlasting as a continued personal survival, as the New Testament writers teach it to be. It implies that there must be a

continuation of personality. The New Testament has not a word to say in favour of the ideas of corporate immortality or impersonal immortality that the followers of Hegel, like William James and John Caird half a century ago taught. And this survival of personality means that the life beyond the grave must be a life of moral activity and moral responsibility, and that there is continuance of the possibility of fellowship of personalities one with another in the life beyond.

Now this brings us at once to the vexed question of the possibility of moral advance or moral retrogression in the future life. It seems the inevitable logical conclusion from the postulating of a life of moral activity beyond the grave, that there should be this possibility of advance or retrogression; but the popular idea of the future life excludes the possibility altogether. To the popular imagination both heaven and hell are conceived as static states —the one a state of endless bliss where the soul of man is relieved of all moral responsibility, the other a state of endless suffering where likewise there is no possibility of moral activity. And further, to the popular mind, the state which the believer shall enjoy for all eternity or the state of punishment the wicked shall suffer are determined for all eternity by their conduct in this life. This teaching is, of course, based on a misunderstanding

of Christ's apocalyptic language when speaking of the life to come, as in Matthew xxv. 31–46, in which, as we have seen, the whole imagery is to be understood figuratively as representing the joy of perpetual communion with God in the after-life, and the misery of alienation from Him. Now as we have seen in Chapter IX., though the New Testament teaches of the coming of a judgment at death, and punishment of the sinner at death, yet Christ teaches as clearly that the possibility of repentance is not confined to this life. The parable of Dives and Lazarus, Luke xvi. 19 f., becomes void of meaning, unless we understand that Jesus taught that there was a possibility of moral advance after death, that men could repent in the after-life of their evil deeds, just as they can repent in this present life.

Further, it is very difficult to see how the popular conception of heaven and hell can be reconciled with the nature of an all-wise and all-good God, who is perfect love. If men are to suffer for all eternity for the sins of this life, and if there is to be no possibility of salvation left to them after death, then we must assume that Christ has failed entirely to win the souls of all men "that none be lost," which He over and over again reiterates in the parables of the Synoptic Gospels (*e.g.* the Lost Sheep, the Lost Piece of Money), and in the

allegories and teaching of St. John's Gospel to be the supreme object of His mission on earth. And further, as so many philosophers have pointed out, there seems a flaw in Divine justice, if an eternity of punishment without possibility of redemption is to be meted out by God to one whose sinful life did not exceed threescore years and ten. Besides, it surely robs the future life of all its interest for us if we are to think that moral character is utterly unattainable after death, and so all moral activity is to be excluded from the life to come. As Dr. W. N. Clarke says (*Christian Theology*, p. 477): "There arises also the question whether God would not be just so far defeated if an endless dualism were established in His universe by the endless sway of sin over a part of His intelligent creatures. From such considerations comes the hope of many that God will finally bring all souls from sin to holiness. Doubtless this is the best result, if God sees it possible." In Chapter VII., when speaking of the Descent of Christ into hell, we saw that the New Testament gives no evidence in support of the idea of there being either Purgatory or Limbo, as the Roman Catholic Church teaches, but as we saw in that chapter, the Descensus of our Lord as described in 1 Peter iii. 18–20 and iv. 6 had the great purpose of bringing the knowledge of the Gospel of salvation to those that had died, and so

salvability after death is an integral part of the teaching of the Apostles' Creed. There are other passages that confirm our conviction that the New Testament writers trusted in the hope that God will yet gain all souls for Himself, *e.g.* John xii. 32; Rom. v. 12–21; Phil. ii. 9–11. Even Bishop Gore feels that it is necessary not to close the door against the Larger Hope. In his *Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans* he says (p. 214): "It is no doubt true that there is in the New Testament an expectation of a final unity of the whole universe in God, and that we find it hard to conceive the relation of lost souls in hell to this final unity. Certainly all legitimate avenues of dim conjecture that a very limited revelation allows to be kept open, ought to be kept open."

Further, the infinite variety in human character demands that there should be an infinite variety in the states of the departed. It would be a monstrous injustice to think of God separating all humanity on the basis of merit into two great classes—the just who are to inherit everlasting life, and the unjust whose lot is to be everlasting punishment. Here again a misunderstanding of the language of apocalyptic lies at the root of the difficulty. But Christ in the Fourth Gospel teaches a much more reasonable doctrine (John xiv. 2): "In my Father's house are *many* mansions: if it

were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." St. Paul teaches the same thing in Romans ii. 12. Thus we may rest assured that the future state of every soul will be a state of blessedness, or the reverse, in exact proportion to the deserts of each, and we may well believe that the mercy of God does not cease at the moment of death, but continues to be exercised in the life beyond, so that in the life to come there can be progress towards righteousness, and a life as morally active as that which we now live under the limitations of our physical nature.

Those who see a danger in such teaching, because it would appear to minimise the awfulness of sin in this world, and to make possible a remission of punishment for sin in the world to come, seem to me to misconceive the meaning of salvation and God's punishment of sin. The whole motive of punishment is not retributive, but to bring the sinner to repentance. Salvation does not mean a mere escaping from the torments of the damned, but it means a transformation into the likeness of God in Christ. And the final purpose of God is to bring into being in this world His Kingdom, when all men shall serve Him.

Therefore if we would inherit eternal life at its richest and fullest, the life everlasting which Christ Himself taught us to seek, we must pay heed to

His words as to how it is to be gained : " Whosoever believeth in Me, and liveth in Me, shall never die " ; " Because I live, ye shall live also " ; or, as St. Paul says, " God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son."

Amidst all that is dark and perplexing as to the life beyond, in face of all our ignorance of what precisely takes place at the point of death, and all our uncertainty of the exact manner of life for souls in the world beyond, it surely will be sufficient for us to rest on these great assurances, and to work and pray that when our time comes to go down to the Valley of the Shadow of Death we need fear no evil, and that we may so live in communion with God here, that in the life everlasting we shall not be bereft of glimpses of His nearer Presence.

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